DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 201 CS 210 268

AUTHOR Small, Robert C., Jr., Ed.; Kelly, Patricia P., Ed.
TITLE A Critical Look at Literature Worth Teaching.
INSTITUTION Virginia Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 182p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Viewpoints (120)
JOURNAL CIT Virginia English Bulletin; v36 n2 Win 1986

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC08 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; *English Curriculum; Higher Education; *Literary Criticism; *Literature Appreciation; *Reader Response; *Reading Material Selection

ABSTRACT

In order to help teachers identify works of literature that will remain vibrant parts of their students' lives and give them new insights into themselves, their friends, and their enemies, this journal contains articles suggesting works that the authors found most meaningful to themselves. Titles and authors are as follows: (1) "'April Morning': Coming to Manhood, All in a Few Hours" (K. Donelson); (2) "Is God Dead?" (L. K. Snyder); (3) "A Record of Epiphanies in the Work of M. E. Kerr" (C. Zinck); (4) "A Shelf Life of 'Forever'" (N. E. Davis); (5) "Pinky's Tale: An Appreciative Response to 'A Day No Pigs Would Die'" (J. Morrell); (6) "A Hero Still Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich" (L. Newbury); (7) "A Look at Foster Care in 'The Great Gilly Hopkins'" (P. Stokes); (8) "The Black Woman: A Focus on 'Strength of Character' in 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings'" (S. S. Cordell); (9) "A Reading of 'Hamlet': An Experiment in Personalized 'New Criticism'" (R. G. Goba); (10) "Robert Frost's 'The Pasture': Poem and Metapoem" (M. S. Moore); (11) "Keats's 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' and Poetic Integrity" (P. Lanier, Jr.); (12) "Early American Literature Worth Teaching: Philip Freneau's 'Indian' Poems" (J. Baker); (13) "Anguish and Anger" (S. Robbins); (14) "Willa Cather--Not Just a Prairie Writer" (E. Beamer); (15) "Bellow's 'Dangling Man': Archetype of Adolescence" (J. E. Davis); (16) "Huck Finn and America's Symbolic Landscape" (D. Walker); (17) "The Missed Adventures of 'Huckleberry Finn'" (K. E. Sullivan); (18) "Hemingway's Hold on Readers" (E. H. Thompson); (19) "A Novel Worth Teaching: Salinger's 'The Catcher in the Rye'" (V. F. Daughtry); (20) "'A Separate Peace': A Novel Worth Teaching" (W. M. Reed); (21) "Merlin's Magic" (N. Merrell); (22) "A Critical Look at John Gardner's 'Grendel'" (M. Segedy); (23) "'Fahrenheit 451': Three Reasons Why It's Worth Teaching" (W. E. Reynolds); (24) "Benedict Kiely and the Irish Gelignite Tradition" (E. C. Epps); (25) "A Mentor-Protege Relationship: A Look at Gail Godwin's 'The Finishing School'" (B. Naff); (26) "The Maturation Theme in Jon Cleary's Fiction" (J. W. Crawford); (27) "Values Clarification in Biblical Literature" (M. Ediger); (28) "History in Literature: 'A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver'" (M. S. Loehr and J. Wright); (29) "The Necessary Lie" (W. Westcott); (30) "The Wise Way--A Gifted Program" (A. L. Gibson and J. Worley); (31) "Staging a Literary Festival" (S. Poe and H. Jessee); (32) "Of Puritans,

Plymouth, and Process" (S. Whiteman); (33) "Owning the Literature and the Lesson, Too" (L. C. Latzko); (34) "Macbeth for the Reluctant Student" (D. Wiest); (35) "Getting from Here to There" (M. K. Simpson); (36) "Literary Clue: A Game of Style" (M. Webster); (37) "A Student-Centered Approach to Teaching Poetry" (P. Curtis); (38) "Integrating Reading and Writing Using Children's Literature: A Novel Approach" (K. D. Dur and N. D. Manning); (39) "Individualized Novel Study" (O. Anderson); and (40) "Writing before Reading" (J. H. Jones). Book reviews relevant to the theme of the journal are also included. (SRT)

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Winter 1986 Volume 36, Number 2

ED284201

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Virginia English Bulletin

A Critical Look at Literature Worth Teaching

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Virginia English Bulletin

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING:

Subscription is included in the annual membership dues of $10.00. Student dues are $2.00. Single copies are $4.00. Membership is for the calendar year. For advertising rates, contact the Business Manager (see above).

Published twice annually by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English Language Arts, a non-profit affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a department of the Virginia Education Association. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of VATE.

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VOLUME 36, NUMBER 2 WINTER 1986

A CRITICAL LOOK AT LITERATURE WORTH TEACHING

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From the Editors: A Critical Look at Literature Worth Teaching

Robert Small and Patricia P. Kelly

Most teachers of English language arts have prepared themselves for this role by majoring in English in a college or university or, at the very least, enrolling in a large English minor. And, although the English language arts officially are comprised of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, the major or minor that those of us who teach this subject have taken is almost always made up mostly of literature courses.

Why is that so? English majors choose that course of study because they "love literature." Few English teachers are composition majors; fewer still are linguistics majors. So, while we teach the skills of writing and sometimes go beyond grammar rules to look at our language as a linguist might view it, we mostly see ourselves as teaching literature.

Literature is the one art form that the American school system has accepted as worthy of study by all students in all grades. Painting and sculpture are a part of the curriculum of very few students; music—other than band and chorus practice—touches the academic lives of a very small percentage of children and teenagers; architecture—sometimes called the "Queen of the Arts"—is almost never studied. But literature is required of all students every year—although those unfortunate and dreary reading skills programs that dominate many elementary school programs reduce reading to mere skills practiced without a purpose and so probably should not be dignified by the terms "literature" or "reading."

Why is the study of literature included in nearly all school curricula when the other arts are left out? One can only wonder at the cleverness that we—English language arts teachers—have displayed in getting our favorite study into the school at all levels and for all students. Perhaps we are not as naive as we are generally thought to be.

Still, smug in our success, we have often given ammunition to our enemies who would ask us: What practical value does the study of literature have? Our obsession with the mechanics of literature—rhyme schemes, authors' birth dates, characters' names, poetic devices—has given us the reputation of dry academics who are out of touch with the vitality of the real world. We sometimes seem to teach literature without understanding or having a passion for the novels and poems and plays that we teach.

We must face the facts: rhyme schemes are not important; the dates of authors' births and deaths are not important; technical terms for literary devices are not important. If works of literature had had to live on the basis of rhyme schemes and who wrote them, no one today would read a sonnet or a novel written a decade or a century ago. No, it is clear that works of literature remain a vibrant part of people's lives only because

of the insights that they give readers about themselves and their friends and enemies. Most readers do not care about the esoterics of literary criticism. Instead they look to literature either to lift them from the routine of their daily lives or to help them understand themselves and the people with whom they live.

Almost fifty years ago, Louise Rosenblatt pointed out to us the mistake that we who teach literature have made about our subject. She demonstrated that readers are not mere passive creatures pulling facts from a work written by someone else. Rather, she explained, readers are creators who bring their experiences and understanding to a dynamic interaction with a work of literature. Out of that vital interaction comes a new creation forged from the reader and the work and, where it is successful, true to both. Thus the teachers' question is not "What does the work say?" but rather "What do you make of the work?"

As teachers of literature, we must look for works from which our students can create knowledge about human life, not merely withdraw details about events and characters. The authors of the articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* have suggested works that they believe can serve as the partners in that vital intercourse between reader and literature and the subsequent sharing between readers that justifies what we do.

Who cares about the story of a white boy and a black slave? Who cares about a playwright's view of the problems facing a Danish prince? Who cares about a poet's description of his first reaction to reading a translation of Homer? No one would care but for the fact that what they wrote can touch us and draw from us and from our students new, rich, and unique creations that never have been and never will be again.

1987 VATE Conference

October 16-18

Virginia Beach Conference Center

April Morning: Coming to Manhood, All in a Few Hours

Ken Donelson

In his "Speaking of Books" column in the *New York Times Book Review* for May 14, 1961, editor and critic J. Donald Adams began,

> Three weeks ago I had what was for me an uncommon experience; I read through a book at a sitting. I have done this before, but rarely. True, the book numbered only 184 pages, which means that the reading took something less than three hours. Another kind of book of the same length might well have taken me longer, but this was one of compelling narrative power, of unflagging interest. It was Howard Fast's *April Morning*, a story of the battle of Lexington as seen through the eyes of a 15-year-old boy who took part in it. When I had finished it, I said to myself, "This is an even better book than Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*." I still think so. All prophecy is dangerous, and literary prophecy in particular. Yet I readily wager that *April Morning* will some day reach the standing of an American classic.

Any invidious comparisons with *Red Badge* aside, I wish Adams had been right. But *April Morning*, fine as it is, has only rarely received the kind of praise it deserved then and deserves now. Adams' praise seems particularly ironic since the novel has often been pigeon-holed as an adolescent or YA novel, and Adams repeatedly attacked such books in his column. And since too many critics and teachers label Fast's novel as adolescent or YA literature (as opposed to all other books by Fast) and since those people *know* that such books can never be anything more than enjoyable and ephemeral, that neatly disposes of *April Morning*.

Careful readers and critics know better because they aren't so eager to categorize books. And Fast's apparently simple little story has more in common with fine works like *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War* and *Huckleberry Finn* than a few obvious and superficial characteristics of the initiation novel.

The plot is briefly told. In eight sections covering slightly more than a day in the middle of April, 1775, when a boy and a town and a people lose their innocence, the reader meets Adam Cooper; learns about the relationships Adam has with his father (Moses), his brother (Levi), his mother (Sarah), Moses' mother (Granny), his girlfriend (Ruth Simmons), and an old soldier who befriends him (Solomon Chandler) and watches Adam leave childhood and uncertainly enter the adult world. The novel is developed in three parts. Part one runs from our first meeting with Adam until his father's death at the hands of British redcoats, part two runs

Ken Donelson is co-editor of the English Journal *and co-author of* Literature for Today's Young Adults. *He was recently elected to the Executive Board of ALAN.*

from Moses' death until the close of the Battle of Lexington with the British, and part three runs from the close of the battle to the end of the book. In about 200 pages and a bit more than a day, we watch a serene land turn to war. We watch peaceful farmers and artisans die on the village green. We watch a group of individuals becoming a united people with a cause. We watch what the first moments of our Revolutionary War were like, not with zeal of patriotism sometimes preached in history texts but in the fear and hysteria caused by blood and death. We watch an immature 15-year-old grow up, not as he might have in normal times but as he was required by the time and the place.

While there are several characters who seem little more than stick figures, notably Adam's mother and brother, several characters jump off the pages and into the reader's life.

Moses Cooper, Adam's father, is one of the strongest and most fascinating characters in literature. Though he is killed halfway through the novel, the power of his personality stays with the reader as certainly as it inhabits Adam's life. Incapable of showing the deep love he feels for his firstborn son, Moses rebukes Adam for all his childish actions. Moses is strong and stubborn, unwilling to bow his head to anyone, even God. Early in the book, the Cooper family sits down to supper.

> The five of us sat down and four of us bent our heads while Father said grace. He didn't hold with bending his head, at grace or any other time, and when Granny once raised this point with him, he replied that one of the many differences between ourselves and Papists and High Church people – who were a shade worse than Papists – was that whereas the latter two sects cringed and groveled before the clay and plaster images they worshipped, we stood face to face with our God, as befitting what He had created in His own image. Granny said that there was possibly some difference between cringing and groveling and a polite bending of the head from the neck, but Father wasn't moved. The difference was quantitative, and therefore only a matter of degree. To him it was a principle. In two minutes, my father could lead any argument or discussion around to being a principle.
>
> So he said grace glaring across the table at the imaginary point where he placed God, and I always felt that God had the worst of it. My father couldn't just begin a meal with something direct and ordinary, like "Thank Thee, O Lord, for Thy daily bread and the fruit of the harvest." Oh, no – no, he had to embellish it. If there was no guest at the meal, God was always present, and tonight my father said sternly:
>
> "We thank Thee, O Lord, for the bread we eat, but we are also conscious of seed we have planted, of the hands that guided the plow and the back bent in toil. The ground is dry as dust, and I will take the liberty of asking for a little rain. I know that Thou givest with one hand and Thou takest away with another, but sometimes it seems to me to go beyond the bounds of reason. Amen!" (pp. 16-17)

Granny is shocked, though not surprised, by her son's words, but the reader senses Adam's grudging respect for a father who fears no one and asks only for treatment he would accord any other man.

Moses often seems to Adam arrogant and unfeeling and incredibly stubborn. When Moses announced to his wife, "I am a man of peace,"

Adam adds to himself that his father was "the most belligerent man of peace I ever encountered."

Shortly before his father dies, the first victim of British bullets, Adam learns that Moses genuinely loves his son, and his father's apparently unfeeling and harsh treatment was only Moses' concern that Adam become the man that Moses wanted. If that perplexes Adam, Fast's characterization of Moses makes the father's past actions believable, not sympathetic but wholly understandable given Moses' high standards, for himself and for anyone he loved. Unfortunately for father and son, the reconciliation comes to a close on Moses' death. And his death makes Adam even less willing to accept the inevitability and finality of their separation.

Near the close of the book and after Adam has taken giant steps toward manhood, his neighbor, Mr. Simmons, urges Adam to remember his father honestly and accurately.

> "Your father was a hard man to know, Adam, and sometimes a body just had to grind his teeth and say, Well, that's Moses Cooper, and that's the way he is, and there isn't one blessed thing you can do to change him. But the way he was, Adam, was a most remarkable way. He was an educated man, like most of the men in our family. He was a prudent man . . . He was a man of many strong convictions, and you had to suffer somewhat to be his friend — or his son."
>
> "I'm not complaining," I muttered.
>
> "I know you are not. Nevertheless, if you recollect him as a saint, you will lose him. Moses Cooper was no saint. He was just as stubborn as a Methodist preacher, but he was a brave man with fine convictions, and I don't think there was ever a day went by that I didn't feel pride and satisfaction in knowing he was my friend." (p. 170)

What a magnificent tribute, and by this time Adam knows how true and right the words are.

While Moses served as Adam's guide before the father's death, Solomon Chandler serves as guide afterwards. When Adam and others gathered on the village green that crucial day and heard the bullets and saw the bayonets, they fled. Adam says,

> You might think that with my father dead, my own fear would have lessened; but it didn't work that way, and all I knew was that I was alone — and who would take care of me or see for me now unless it was myself? (p. 104)

And the answer comes only minutes later when Adam tumbles over a wall and finds himself held, until his hysteria disappears, by the steel-vise arms of 61-year-old Solomon Chandler. Solomon has seen war before, and he is ready for this war as few others are, and for a time he teaches Adam some necessary lessons. When Adam berates himself for being a coward and leaving his father's body where it lay, Solomon says,

> "Cowards, you were, Adam?" he asked at last.
>
> "Yes — cowards."
>
> "Oh? I think you have got something to learn, laddie, about the nature of cowardice and bravery. It takes no courage to fire a gun and to kill, merely a state of mind that makes killing possible. Such a state of mind does not come easily to decent folk." (p. 110)

Those words, so apt for the time and Adams' state of mind, later come to haunt Adam and change his relationship with the old man. But for the moment, Solomon is the right person to be Adam's protector and teacher.

After becoming the leader of the rag-tag group of Americans firing at the British from behind stone walls, Solomon's an-eye-for-an-eye and God's-on-our-side principles are challenged by the minister when Solomon says to Adam,

> "Prime your gun careful, and don't ever fire unless the man's upon you. Count his buttons. A gun like yours won't stop a man at more than thirty paces."
>
> "Yes, sir," I said. "I'll heed your words."
>
> "Take no pleasure in it. Let it hurt, but become hard in the sorrow."
>
> "Would you tell him that?" the Reverend asked.
>
> "And you, too, Reverend. I tell you that. We'll weep for them, but they brought the killing to us, not us to them."
>
> "God help all of us," the Reverend said.
>
> "I say amen to that. We fight in God's cause."
>
> "Nobody fights in God's cause," the Reverend replied harshly. "Isn't it enough to kill in freedom's name? No one kills in God's cause. He can only ask God's forgiveness."
>
> The old man heard this respectfully. "As you say, Reverend. I would like to dispute it somewhat, but there ain't time." (p. 128)

Adam is confused by the argument, but he begins to recognize that Solomon's words are religious justifications—or madness, as Twain recognized in his "War Prayer"—for carnage. Only a little bit later, Adam knows that his feeling of respect for the old man is gone.

> I no longer felt any warmth toward the old man. I would kill and he would kill, but he took pleasure in the killing. (p. 138)

And at the end of the book, Adam no longer needs his father to lead him, though Moses will always be there with him, and Adam has rejected Solomon in almost every way. By that time, Adam has become his own man. As the book opens the reader sees a young man who allows things to happen to him. He reacts but he is almost incapable of acting. That changes when he decides to join the local committee to fight the British, even though his mother and brother know that Moses will oppose Adam's wish. To Adam's surprise, Moses recognizes that Adam has been propelled by circumstance into manhood though Adam doubts it. Solomon looks at his watch and says,

> "Twelve minutes after nine," he said, "and you've lost your youth and come to manhood, all in a few hours, Adam Cooper. O, that's painful. That is indeed."
>
> "I wish it was true that I have come to manhood," I said bitterly.
>
> "Give it time, Adam. Give it time." (p. 107)

Time has little to do with manhood, as Adam learns, but the times have much to do with manhood. The times force Adam into responsibilities he does not want but responsibilities he must accept. When he returns home after the first battle of the war, he finds that his mother is incapable of action—hardly surprising to Adam since Moses had never delegated real responsibility on serious matters to Sarah at any time—and, worse

yet, Granny, who had always seemed so strong, is aging almost before Adam's eyes. Adam left his family as a child and returned a man, all in a little more than a day. If Adam might have preferred to go back to the childhood he left only a day before, he cannot. His family and the times demand otherwise.

While it has little to do with characterization, readers may enjoy playing—as I did—with the biblical parallels to four characters. Ruth, though less developed as a character, exemplifies the earlier Ruth, "whither thou goest (Adam) I will go." Moses Cooper is much like the prophet. Adam's father is intelligent and a respecter of ideas and learning who knows what is right and stubbornly leads his people (both his immediate family and the townspeople) onward toward the promised land (for his family, security; for his sons, maturity; for the townspeople, a land again safe and tranquil) but who is never allowed to see the promised land himself. Solomon is a hard and harsh lawgiver, deeply committed to the rightness of Old Testament justice, sure of himself and unwilling to compromise, a leader never wholly trusting his followers. Adam is like the first man, unformed and incomplete, a bit too sure of himself, superstitious and ignorant yet eager to know the truth, but temporarily satisfied with the peace of family and home.

The theme of *April Morning*, or rather the ambiguous and multiple themes, fascinate me, partly because my first reading convinced me that here was an obviously superior initiation novel. Clearly the book is a *bildungsroman*. A young man is separated for a time from a loving family on a quest. During the quest, whether alone or with friends, he undergoes tests of courage, both physical and emotional, and he ultimately returns to his home in a new and changed role.

On second reading—and you'll need to remember this was back in the late, troubled '60s—Fast's novel seemed even clearer; but this time I saw the theme as generation gap, Adam and Moses, Moses and Granny. While I no longer find this compelling, I suppose others might.

During that second reading, or perhaps a third, I read *April Morning* concurrently with *Red Badge* and a good deal of Twain, particularly "The War Prayer" and *Huckleberry Finn*. That was when Vietnam was becoming troublesome, and less a holy war, for lots of us. I admired Fast's honest patriotism which was far removed from paranoid patriotism or chauvinism. I admired Moses and Mr. Simmons and others caught up in something beyond their comprehension. I admired their simple and genuine statements about why they were fighting, not for God's cause or for the good of humanity or to save the entire country from tyranny but because the British had violated their land and their people. Simple, direct, honest and admirable. I'd read so many novels virtually sanctifying American Revolutionary War heroes that it was delightful to read an honest account of people forced into actions they deplore, actions that will have consequences none of them can possibly foresee. I wondered if a more obvious theme was war as a determiner of values, the kind of thing Hemingway had written so often,

though Fast and Hemingway had little in common about their conclusions. For Hemingway, war was often good because it allowed man's greatness to emerge. Fast's attitude was more to my taste.

But all those interpretations/themes bothered me and left me unsatisfied. I noticed on a slightly later reading what Elizabeth Collamore discussed in her "False Starts and Distorted Vision" in the November, 1969, *English Journal*, that *April Morning* is a search for truth. When the reader meets Adam, he is drawing water from the family well and muttering incantations to take the evil spell off the water. His father, a worshiper of reason and learning, rebukes Adam for the display of superstitious ignorance, but Moses himself tends to talk in maxims and platitudes. Adam questions much about the world, but his questioning of God to Granny establishes his shallow thought, most of it announced to shock people. Later after his father has been killed, Adam temporarily takes refuge in a fantasy, pretending that Moses is still alive and there to lead Adam; but he soon realizes that pretense is a child's substitute for truth, bitter as it sometimes is. When he returns home, a man, he has learned to accept truth and to live with it. And he learns what we must all learn, that some people like superficial, easy truths. When he is approached by a reporter from the Boston *Advertiser*, Adam is asked what happened on the village common that began the battle.

> I was past being able to think clearly, and I begged him to put his questions to someone else.
>
> "Don't you have an interest in the truth, Mr. Cooper?" He called me mister, anticipating that I wouldn't be able to resist the flattery.
>
> "I'm too tired to know what the truth is."
>
> "A patriot always knows what the truth is."
>
> I stared at him dumbly . . . I shook my head and pushed past him out of the church. (p. 164)

Truth is never something easily come by, and superstitions and platitudes and pretense and popular myths are no substitute for truth. Adam learns that ever so slowly just as we all must. The reporter is unhappy proof that not everyone wants the truth or cares to search for it.

In Anne Commire's *Something about the Author* (Vol. 7, Detroit Gale Research Company, 1975), Howard Fast said, "*April Morning* is as good a book as I have ever written, as nearly perfect a book as I could hope to write." In his later, and more commercial work, he's never surpassed *April Morning*, nor would I expect him to. It's a high compliment to Fast that so many readers—but not enough—have found in Adam Cooper a boy out of the past who is as contemporary as Huck Finn, a boy worth knowing and learning from.

Is God Dead?

Lucinda K. Snyder

Many problems of the modern world—threat of nuclear war, starvation and disease in underdeveloped countries, uncertainty about the future—lead people to wonder, is there a God? And if so, does he play a role in our lives today? In seeking an answer to these questions, authors Robert Newton Peck and Katherine Paterson have gone back to America of the 1920's, 30's and 40's in their novels, *A Day No Pigs Would Die* and *Jacob Have I Loved*. Peck and Paterson show how religion can greatly influence a person's life and be a basis or guiding force which affects all aspects of living. Peck and Paterson follow the young protagonists, Rob in *Pigs* and Louise in *Jacob*, as they try to discover and accept themselves for what they are. In both books, religion is a foundation upon which the characters build as they learn more about life and their own places in the world.

Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* tells the story of Rob, a Shaker boy, who at twelve has not yet recognized the value of the simple life his religion encourages. Rob loves his family and respects their adherence to the rules established in the Book of Shaker, but he also feels natural resentment toward those mysterious powers, God and Shaker Law, that shape his life. Throughout the novel, Peck emphasizes the effect being a Shaker has on Rob. In the first chapter, Rob runs away from school, embarrassed because another boy laughed at his clothes and made fun of his Shaker ways. Rob is not yet confident enough in himself to ignore his schoolmate's taunts. Because Rob does not fully accept Shakerism, he cannot defend it. He runs away, but he is ashamed of his behavior.

Peck includes small details of Shaker life to make his narration more realistic and accessible to non-Shaker readers. He mentions that Rob's father, Haven Peck, takes his weekly bath on Saturday in order to be clean for Sunday morning's Shaker Meeting. He also explains "frills" and the Shaker aversion to them. Shakers live an austere, simple life. Unnecessary possessions or luxuries are regarded as "a work of the Devil, a frill." When a neighbor offers Rob a pig because Rob helped save the neighbor's cow, Mr. Peck first says the boy cannot have the gift because, "It's not the Shaker Way to take frills for being neighborly." The Shaker Laws act as guidelines for the Pecks' lives. The family does not live by them out of fear but from choice and need for a solid basis. Haven Peck happily

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A student at William and Mary, Lucinda Snyder was enrolled in a class taught by Betty Swiggett when she wrote this essay.

allows Rob to have the pig when his neighbor agrees to take a promise of help on his farm in return.

The Book of Shaker is an ever-present force in the Pecks' daily lives. Haven tells Rob to build his pig, Pinky, a pen because he "Can't keep swine and kine under the same roof. Says so in the Book of Shaker." The Shaker Laws control not only religious feelings but all aspects of life. Haven explains to Rob that all the laws have a basis in plain reason or common sense and are not meant to be arbitrary or overly confining.

Rob, however, still questions his Shaker values. He needs visible reenforcement and wonders at his father's easy acceptance of a book he cannot even read for himself. "How do you know it's all writ down, Papa?" Rob questions. His father understands the boy's doubts, and replies, "Our Law has been read to me. And because I could not read, I knew to listen with a full heart."

Rob accepts the presence of God in his life, but is not ready to subscribe completely to the Shaker rules. He does not see any harm in Sunday afternoon baseball games or an occasional store-bought coat, things considered frills, and tells his father, "It seems to me what we have most is dirt and work." Haven Peck assures Rob they are rich in ways "worldly people" are not because they have each other, the land, and a "mission" in life. Haven is trying to tell his son that being content with what one has is the true route to happiness. When Rob sadly asks, "Why do we have to be Plain People? Why do we, Papa?" his father tells him he will have the things he wants as he *earns* them, an idea that is the basic tenet of Shaker life.

By the conclusion of the novel, Rob has grown a great deal. He is becoming a man; and, when his father dies, he is ready to accept responsibility for his family. At this point, he turns to his religion, finding in its rituals a comfort and security that strengthen him. Rob makes all the funeral arrangements, contacting "Mr. Wilcox, who was a good Shaker man and who took care of our dead," and the Circle of Shakers in the town, who provide a coffin. Called upon to speak at the service, Rob says, "We ask only that his soul enter the Kingdom Hall, there to abide forever," reflecting his father's simple wants and lifestyle and adopting them for himself.

Just as Shakerism provides a constant backdrop for Rob's life, Methodism and religion in general greatly affect Louise in Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved*. Told from Louise's point of view, the story contains many references to religion and the role it plays in the daily life of the island. The steeple of the Methodist Church is one of the first things one sees as he approaches the island, and its influence is continually felt.

"Thank the Lord" is a "true island expression." Louise says, "Rass had lived in the fear and mercy of the Lord since the early nineteenth century, when Joshua Thomas, 'The Parson of the Islands,' won every man, woman, and child of us to Methodism." Their religion is important to the islanders. They have morning and evening services on Sunday, along with a Wednesday night prayer meeting. They also "keep the Sabbath," meaning that on

Sundays there is "no work, no radio, no fun" and no reading except the Bible and the Sunday School paper. Island Methodism further dictates a no-alcohol policy, a taboo on playing cards (except for Rook and Old Maid), and a strict adherence to the rules of the Ten Commandments.

Louise has difficulty accepting God in her life. Because she has been raised with a strong religious background, however, she sees God in everything. Even as she tries to say she does not believe in God, the Bible and Methodist teachings influence all that she does. Talking with Call while crabbing, Louise tells a joke about the Apostle Peter and says, "Even the preacher talks about hell." Religious references come very naturally in Louise's conversation and are considered a common part of life. The solos Louise's sister Caroline and another girl sing in the Christmas concert are religious songs and nightly prayers are a ritual. Louise shows the importance of religion on the island as she tests the Captain. Trying to discover if he is really Hiram Wallace, she asks him what the Seventh Commandment is, realizing that a true islander would immediately know the answer.

All the religious fervor of the island seems somewhat hypocritical to Louise because she feels rejected by God. At one point she says, "There was something about the thought of God being with me that made me feel more alone than ever. It was like being with Caroline," the sister Louise resents. Louise does not think God is very fair; she feels that Caroline has everything and she has nothing. Even as she is angry, however, she also feels guilty and fearful that she will be "eternally damned for hating" her sister. Louise becomes frustrated because she does not benefit from religion, yet she cannot free herself from its influence.

The negative aspects of religion are embodied in Louise's grandmother. Grandma is rather senile, but her often cruel remarks still upset the family, especially Louise. Grandma uses the Bible as a weapon, digging up quotations that cut into vulnerable places. She preaches against adultery, calls Louise's mother a whore, and predicts the end of the world through Bible verses.

When Grandma tells Louise, "Romans nine thirteen . . . As it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,' " Louise convinces herself that God does hate her, and there is "no use struggling or even trying." Louise stops going to church and praying, but she does not stop thinking about God. After she learns that Call and Caroline are engaged, her first thought is, "How unjust to throw everything at me at once." Then she says, "Oh, God." Remembering that she has renounced Him, she covers her thoughts with, "If I had believed in God I could have cursed him and died."

Although she tries to reject God, as Louise matures she finally learns that God is not responsible for her unhappiness. Once she stops feeling victimized, she is able to open herself to others and learn the value religion can have in life. Louise has to go away before she can come home, just as she must meet Joseph Wojkiewicz before she can truly find herself. When Joseph tells her, "God in heaven's been raising you for this valley

from the day you were born," Louise first reacts with anger; once again someone is preaching to her about God and His plan. Then Louise realizes that Joseph sees an inner strength and goodness that has been growing within her all her life, and she responds with love.

After Louise delivers the twin babies, the cycle begun at her birth is complete, and she can finally find peace with herself and God. As she walks home, she remembers Caroline singing "I Wonder as I Wander," and she feels the power of religious belief and of love.

Young adult novels such as *A Day No Pigs Would Die* and *Jacob Have I Loved* are relevant in today's uncertain world because they address problems everyone faces. Coming to terms with oneself and the expectations of others are important parts of growing up. As Louise and Rob try to decide the part that religion will play in their lives, they are learning about themselves and maturing. Adolescent readers can identify with Louise's and Rob's doubts and questions and find some help in making decisions for their own lives.

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A Record of Epiphanies in the Work of M. E. Kerr

Catherine Zinck

> As a sketcher, Tucker could find a face smorgasbord in the libraries, too. It seemed to him sometimes that anyone with any trouble at all eventually found his way to a city library, and the really troubled ones became regulars. Their features were wrecked with disappointment and forbearance. Tucker would look for them at the Epiphany branch on East 23rd. (*Dinky Hocker*, p. 7)

Tucker Woolf collects faces. The best site is the Epihany library. Although, as a character, he would not realize the irony of the above quote, it is likely that Marijane Meaker enjoys the parallel between what she does as writer M. E. Kerr and what Tucker does with his drawing. She records literary epiphanies, which is, according to James Joyce, one of the major functions of the writer in the twentieth century. Although Kerr does not use this tool extensively, when she employs it in such novels as *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, *What I Really Think of You*, and *Night Kites* and in her autobiography *Me Me Me Me Me*, she adds layers of insight.

The earliest definition of *epiphany* as a literary term comes from James Joyce's *Stephen Hero*. On page 211, the title character speaks of a "sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself." Joyce believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most "delicate and evanescent of moments."

From this minimal definition and Joyce's later use of the concept of epiphany in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* comes one of the most important literary techniques of this century, the core of many writers' concepts of their own art, this function of recording epiphanies. The writer captures a moment, holds it for the reader, who, ideally, experiences in turn his own epiphany, his own "sudden vision" (Beja, p. 19). The epiphany as literary technique occurs on three levels: the writer experiences it and transmits it in his work, and the audience may then have its own revelation.

In *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, Morris Beja states that literary epiphany has several qualities. The first of these involves the transcending of time. The epiphany must last only a short time, perhaps a moment. Although this frame can be telescoped or collapsed, the time seems to be eternal as opposed to the limitations set by hours and minutes.

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Time is telescoped in the epiphany in *What I Think of You*. Opal Ringer experiences both a literary and a religious epiphany that lasts several minutes both in reading time and in Opal's life. Opal is at a prayer meeting, a Soaking, at the Helping Hand Tabernacle where her father is a preacher. She hears all the familiar words and songs. Then she sees a boy she used to know come down the aisle. For no logical reason she views the world from a new vantage point. "Yes, Jesus," she says, falls unconscious, and awakes speaking in tongues (pp. 195-197).

From all the familiar stimuli, from sights and sounds she has heard from childhood comes the insight. This is the second quality needed for literary epiphany. The cause must be trivial, arbitrary, with no rational relationship between trigger and insight. There is no logical explanation for Opal's conversion.

The stimulus for this change of level of awareness is often ordinary, "a concrete object, a work of art, a snatch of talk on the street" (p. 15). In her autobiography *Me Me Me Me Me*, Kerr gives examples of personal epiphanies that have been set off by similar common stimuli. She tells of the effect that the reading of a line from Thomas Wolfe had on her as a young girl. "For you are what you are, you know what you know, and there are no words for the loneliness, black bitter, aching loneliness, that gnaws the roots of silence in the night" (*Me*, p. 15). Kerr knows as she reads this phrase that she is changed forever, a significant component of epiphany. This insight was similar to one that her librarian had also experienced. When the woman saw the Wolfe book, she commented, "I remember how *I* felt when I first read him" (p. 16).

This chain of epiphanies, this passing on, handing down, remembering, is an important aspect of the experience. Either the past is recaptured with fresh insight or an earlier revelation may be relived. These insights are generally regarded as secular in nature rather than religious. However, in Kerr's case there is obviously some overlap because of the religious elements that occur in her books.

Although Beja sees literary epiphany as "Irreligious . . . anti-religious . . . irrational . . . anti-rational" (p. 21), Kerr's strongest epiphany scene deals with religious conversion. That this is so is ironic. According to Kathy Piehl's article in the *Voice of Youth Advocates*, Meaker, although fascinated by religion, does not yet believe in God (p. 307). In her autobiography she claims always to have had "a quarrel with organized religion" (p. 111). Yet the insights her character Opal receives during her epiphany are strong enough to transform her. "My whole life changed. During that in between time, long after the seed time, was the harvest, and I'll tell you about those harvests from my own experience: You don't see them coming. That's what amazes me" (*What I Think*, p. 194).

Beja believes the use of epiphany as a literary technique to be more frequent in the twentieth century for several reasons: he sees a general disillusion with religion that engenders a desire for enlightenment now as opposed to waiting through several incarnations or for entry into Heaven;

a rejection of pure, scientific rationalism; a persistent Romantic influence; an increased interest in psychology with an inward preference that often leads to introspective, autobiographical work; a sense of isolation, a "despair of ever having contact with another human being"; a move toward poetic techniques in fiction; and an emphasis on trivial details to establish verisimilitude (p. 46).

Kerr plays with several of these elements in her books. In *Night Kites*, the reader, if not the characters, may experience an epiphany. References to Edgar Allan Poe trigger flashes of recognition. Nicki's mother is Annabel Poe. Nicki lives in a rundown motel called The Kingdom by the Sea where the suites are named Helen, The Raven, Dream within a Dream, and Bells, Bells, Bells. In all of her books characters experience intense isolation, a theme central to Kerr's work. Dinky Hocker is isolated by her obesity, Nicki by her instability, Opal Ringer and Jessee Pegler by their parents' religious beliefs. Pete, another character in *Night Kites*, is set apart by the AIDS he has contacted as a result of his homosexuality. Also, Kerr is an expert at the use of trivial detail to create the illusion of a realistic world. She has kept up to date with MTV and the Guess? clothes familiar to her current readers.

An epiphany, whether literary or religious, typically follows a specific pattern (Beja, p. 26). Paul on the road to Damascus experiences a conversion that is not atypical of those used as literary device. Religious conversion and literary epiphany often follow a similar pattern. At times there is overlap as in the case of Opal Ringer whose literary epiphany is also a religious conversion.

Primarily there is a period of deep despair and doubt followed by a sense of passivity and hopelessness. Although the insight comes suddenly, there may be some form of spiritual preparation. The epiphany is often followed by a sense of rebirth after intense struggle, by profound stability and peace.

This pattern is basically the one that Opal Ringer follows. She is filled with despair, hates her life at the Hand of God Tabernacle, would like to find any way out. She is tired of her poverty and its segregation. Just before the conversion scene she denies the one aspect of her life that had previously offered hope, the Rapture, the Hand of God Sweeping up all the Chosen to Heaven at the End of the World.

> Her mother starts to say, "When Rapture comes—"
> I didn't even let her finish. "That dumb thing isn't ever coming! We just always say it's coming when we can't take what's already here!" (*What I Think*, p. 193)

Although Opal believes that she has renounced all that had been important to her, her moment of epiphany, her conversion, has been carefully prepared for by a youth spent in a fundamentalist church where people regularly speak in tongues, are faith-healed, are struck by the Spirit of the Lord. Opal does not believe her faith strong enough to experience these. Yet it is no surprise when they occur.

Opal has done battle with her doubts for the length of the novel. After

her conversion she feels enormous peace. No longer isolated, she feels happy with her life for the first time. She is ecstatic. "I love you, yes I love you. When the Rapture comes, I want you all along, somehow, some way, every last one of you, ascending with me" (*What I Think*, p. 208).

Although Beja does not describe conversion in sexual terms, other writers have. This type of epiphany seems more likely to occur if there are religious aspects to the epiphany. Emily Dickinson tells of "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!" (Johnson, p. 32). San Juan de la Cruz speaks of "una noche oscura/ con ansias en amores inflamada" (Marin, p. 156), "a dark night flamed by the torment of love." Opal describes her own epiphany in sexual terms. "Bud's body swaying beside my own, everyone moving back and forth. I was going up so high. I was on a climb. I was reaching so high that suddenly Bud's hand reached high to grab mine, holding mine but not able to keep me down until I fell. I fell" (*What I Think*, p. 197).

As a literary technique, epiphany has several functions (Beja p. 22). As it does in *What I Really Think of You*, an epiphany may mark the climax of the novel. It may also introduce flashbacks, work as a unifying device to bring together the threads of the novel. That technique is used both in *Night Kites* and *Dinky Hocker*. In *Night Kites* Pete and his mother have always used French as a secret language that shuts out the father and the rest of the family. In an emotional scene, Pete's lover Jim speaks French to him. The reader flashes back to similar scenes that had occurred between mother and son. The viewpoint character Erick suddenly understands the powerful bond between his mother and his brother at the moment that the bond is intruded upon. In another scene Pete tells Erick "Prendre la lune avec les dents," "Seize the moon with your teeth" (p. 113). Whether or not Erick experiences an epiphany with the advice, readers may gain insight.

A reference in *Dinky Hocker* to *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery serves as a unifying device with the potential for revelation. The day that Tucker, the viewpoint character, meets Natalia, he sees on the sermon board of the First Unitarian Church, "If you tame me, then we shall need each other./ To me you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world" (p. 9). For Christmas Natalia, through no logical process, gives Tucker a handmade doll dressed to look like the Little Prince with the first words of the same verse hand lettered on the gold crown (p. 113). Tucker and reader both experience a flash of recognition.

In all of the epiphanies mentioned, there has been an arbitrary, non-rational cause. The following scenes are, however, not epiphanies because their insight comes logically. Tucker tries to understand the meaning of *bordello*. His father and his uncle offer vague definitions. However, they both give enough information for Tucker to grasp the concept. " 'You mean a whorehouse,' Tucker said. 'I get it' " (*Dinky Hocker*, p. 67). Also in *Dinky Hocker* is a climactic scene that is not an epiphany scene. Tucker explains conclusions he has reached logically about Dinky and her

relationship with P. John. "If it wasn't that much it was all Susan ever had" (p. 193). Later he says, "I think it's about things amounting to a lot more than people think they amount to. I think it's about having your feelings shoved aside . . . People who don't shoot smack have problems, too" (p. 194).

James Joyce saw the function of the artist to be a recorder of epiphanies. Although M. E. Kerr may not have collected as many as he did, she has produced several evocative examples of epiphany in her work, her "little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark . . ." (Woolf, p. 249).

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A Shelf Life of *Forever*

Nancy E. Davis

Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Nature" was the order of the day, but it was the last thing I wanted to read. I was not feeling well, and all I wanted to do was wrap myself up in an afghan, curl up in my chair with some hot tea to drink, and stay there all afternoon. I did just that, but with a small addition. I brought along a copy of *Forever* by Judy Blume. Then, I settled into an afternoon filled with memories of the fifth grade and my first encounter with *Forever*.

Forever is a book full of firsts: first love, first sexual encounter, first heartbreak. These are the things adolescents are concerned with, the things that affect them the most at this time in their lives. It is a topical book that young people have been reading for over ten years, much to the chagrin of parents everywhere. Despite the main characters' being bright young adults living in suburban middle class America, parents fear the book for the very same reason that young people love it: the sexual content. Judy Blume once said, "Sex is very interesting." But parents do not want their children to be interested in sex, and, therefore, they find much of the book inappropriate for young people. Thus, *Forever* has been a controversial book since it was published in 1975.

In *Forever*, Judy Blume successfully combines the idealistic images of young love with the realistic responsibilities that come with growing up. The beautiful silver disk engraved with "Forever" that Michael gives to Katherine for her eighteenth birthday is in direct contrast to Katherine's decision to take the responsibility of birth control in her own hands and go to Planned Parenthood in New York to get the Pill. Michael's gift to Katherine is representative of the idealism of youth, while Katherine's "gift" to Michael is indicative of the responsibilities of becoming an adult.

Parents should recognize that Katherine and Michael are actually good role models for young people. They are responsible young adults who fall in love and who make a commitment, one that they think will last forever. They do not fall into bed the first time they meet, nor is sex the only aspect of their relationship. Instead, Blume shows us how the relationship develops and how Katherine slowly reaches her decision to sleep with Michael for the first time. *Forever* deals with sexuality, birth control, and young love in a realistic way. Blume thinks it is important for the adolescent to realize that there are other young people who are trying to cope with awakening sexual feelings and that these feelings are normal and healthy.

Nancy E. Davis was a student at the College of William and Mary enrolled in a course designed to examine various aspects of literature for adolescents when she wrote this article.

Her books are reassuring to young people and confirm the naturalness of their sexuality. Condemned, stifled, or censored sexuality in the lives of young adults can only lead to unhealthy consequences.

Forever has a great deal of social value. The book favorably portrays the relationship that develops between responsible, intelligent, college-bound young adults, a relationship that eventually comes to include sex. But, despite the attention it has been given, sex is not the only topic of this book. It is primarily about growing up and realizing that somehow believing in forever is easier when you are young. For Katherine, forever is just too long. Some readers have complained that Katherine's first encounter with sex and her first real break-up are just too easy; but in fact, Blume shows that neither experience was easy for Katherine, that she was confused by the sudden changes in her life, that she was nervous about, and ultimately disappointed in, her first sexual experience, and that her break-up with Michael was both difficult and painful.

Many adults can remember reading *Forever* when it was first published or in the years immediately following its publication. At my grade school in New York, the book was often confiscated in the classroom, but because we were reading during class, not because of its content. It was, in fact, never banned or censored from the school library. A friend from Northern Virginia remembers that *Forever* was the only book in her school library that required written parental permission before it could be checked out. There were ways to read it though, even if parents said no. All one had to do was borrow an older sibling's copy or buy one. Other friends remember reading the book secretly so that parents and teachers would not find out. And in some places, the book was actually banned because of the supposedly explicit sex scenes.

Parents and teachers should remember that Blume did not write *Forever* as a treatise encouraging young people to experiment with pre-marital sex. There is no reason for adults to believe that, just because adolescents might read about sex, they are going to go out and emulate the experiences of the characters in the book. There, of course, are some faults to be found with the book. None of the characters, other than Katherine, are particularly well-developed. That failure to develop other characters is probably why adolescent girls are more interested in the book than are the boys. Maybe if Michael was a stronger character, the book would be equally appealing to both sexes. I also think that, if Katherine's parents were developed a little more, the parents of adolescents might be more understanding about the book because they could place themselves in the stronger parental role.

Censoring *Forever* and books like it will never stop children from growing up or prevent them from becoming aware of their own sexuality. We should let youth learn about sex in a healthy, open, and informative way, not make them sneak around and learn about something natural in an uninformed, restricted way. Denying human sexuality is unhealthy, and banning a book that confronts adolescent sexuality is a way of attempting to deny young people this very sexuality. *Forever* neither encourages, nor

discourages, pre-marital sex. It is merely a story that attempts to portray the adolescent's struggle to balance the idealism of childhood with the realism of ensuing adulthood. This book should not pose a threat to anyone; everyone I know who read it as a teenager remembers it in a positive way, with bittersweet memories of first love. How long will the shelf life of this book be? My guess is forever.

GOOD READING FOR SENIOR HIGH STUDENTS: NCTE BOOKLIST AVAILABLE IN NEW EDITION

Getting high school students involved with good books is the aim of a new paperback guide from the National Council of Teachers of English. The 1985 edition of *Books for You*, just off the press, describes nearly 1,200 well-written fiction and nonfiction titles for young adults, published from 1982 through 1984. The compilers of this widely used reference book are experienced teachers of English. In brief, lively comments they describe the particular appeal of each book for senior high readers. To make their selections, they reviewed some 2,500 recent titles.

Books chosen for inclusion are arranged under 49 topics running alphabetically from Adventure to Women; in between come Biography and Autobiography, Careers and Jobs, Computers, Ethnic Experiences, Family Conflicts, Historical Fiction, Horror, Human Rights, Humor, Mysteries, Recreation, Romance, Science, Science Fiction, Space, and a host of other categories. The aim is to help high school readers through the sometimes baffling business of finding books that interest them, for school assignments or for their own pleasure or information.

Because individual testers and abilities differ, the *Books for You* committee note titles whose level of difficulty or controversial content make them best for mature readers.

Commenting on recent trends in young adult books, reviewing committee chair Donald R. Gallo of Central Connecticut State University said, "I'm happy to see more books dealing with family relationships—ones which portray parents, grandparents and other adults playing important roles in their children's lives. They help students see their relationships to earlier generations." Gallo noted "better literary quality" and "more depth of treatment" in some teen romances, as talented writers turn to this fast-selling genre.

But he noted publishers' continuing neglect of black and Hispanic young adult readers, as well as other minorities. The problem, he said, is also evident as good, older titles by and about minorities go out of print.

"The 'excellence' trend seems to be reducing the number of new high-interest books that are easy to read," Gallo said, "but the need for such books remains."

Among books on the problems teens face, Gallo cited "a variety of excellent new books on issues such as sexuality, divorce, death, and suicide. Some adults," he said, "would rather not see books on topics as depressing as suicide. But there's no question that the better books have potential for helping readers understand the emotions involved, and thus aid prevention and help survivors."

Religion, Gallo observed, "used to be ignored totally. It was taboo among publishers. Now a few good young adult novels dealing with religion are appearing, perhaps as a result of public discussion of issues that involve religion."

Good nonfiction and well-written short stories for young adults are more readily available now, Gallo said. But "there is still not a lot of poetry for this audience, and plays with teenage characters are still almost nonexistent."

Books for You is indexed by title and author.

(*Books for You: A Booklist for Senior High Students*, edited by Donald R. Gallo. 380 pages, paperbound. Price: $8.00; NCCTE members, $6.25. ISBN: 0-8141-03634. LC: 85-21666. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 03634-015.)

Pinky's Tale: An Appreciative Response to *A Day No Pigs Would Die*

Judy Morrell

I first met Pinky during an adolescent literature course I took recently, and I shall never forget her or her touching story. It wasn't until my second, more careful trip through Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* (Dell, 1972), however, that I made some important discoveries about this deceptively brief but loaded autobiographical book about an unassuming twelve-year-old Vermont farm boy and his pet pig, Pinky.

1. Rarely in American literature has an animal, let alone a lowly pig, been used so effectively for so many literary purposes. In her own quiet way (except, of course, for occasional significant grunts or squeals to convey her moods that range from contentment to terror), Pinky is truly the unifying force in the novel.
2. Pinky is also Peck's subtle vehicle for conveying many of his significant points about the lifestyle of these charming Vermont people among whom he grew up and specifically about a boy's bittersweet rite of passage into adulthood.
3. This is a perfect novel for class study in grades eight through ten.

A Day No Pigs Would Die tells the poignant story of Robert Peck's maturity from boyhood to manhood during his critical thirteenth year. Its theme, then, asks the universal question, "What does it take to be a man?" To answer that question Peck selects specific meaningful episodes from that important year and presents just the rich essence of them in fifteen fast-moving chapters that reveal some tough realities of the rural Vermont life in the 1920's. Such an episodic style, of course, requires a unifying factor to tie all the pieces together into a meaningful whole. Peck's use of Rob as the first-person narrator automatically provides much unity, and his early introduction of Pinky as Rob's pet and constant companion reinforces the connections in plot. Pinky's natural objectivity balances the subjectivity of any first-person narrator.

As the center of Rob's attention, the pig is a convenient vehicle for many of Peck's interesting sidelights in the novel, such as an explanation of some Shaker beliefs as well as a demonstration of the religious tolerance among Vermonters. Since the Pecks are strict Shakers who allow themselves "no

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frills," Baby Pinky's arrival as a gift from a grateful neighbor presents a moral problem. Because a pet is considered a frill, Rob has never had any live thing to call his own, yet the piglet is obviously just the companion and recipient of stored-up affection that this lonely boy needs as he approaches adolescence. Haven Peck, Rob's proud father, immediately refuses the gift, pointing out that Shakers help neighbors because it is right to do that, not to earn a frill. Pinky then becomes a means for the good Baptist neighbor, Benjamin Tanner, to show his respect for Haven's religious views and pride, for he cleverly insists that the animal is a belated birthday gift for the boy. Apparently Shakers can have birthday gifts, for the piglet is then allowed into Rob's arms and heart, and thus she begins her literary journey.

Pinky's next function is to provide Peck with the opportunity to show Haven's wealth of practical knowledge as a farmer as well as some of his Shaker wisdom gleaned from sixty years of hearing the Book of Shaker read at the Meeting House. Since Pinky needs a pen, Haven decides to convert the large, old corn cratch into a sty, but first he insists on dragging it from its location adjacent to the cow barn out to the nearby meadow. When Rob says that even their strong ox Solomon could not do that feat, Haven tells him that they will help by giving the ox some "extra thinking." That opens the door for his technical how-to lesson on using a capstan, an axle, and a crank handle coupled to an ox (old-fashioned physics?) to accomplish a seemingly impossible feat of strength. As Solomon works, Haven explains to Rob (and the reader) the Shaker Law, which goes way back and which forbids keeping swine and kine under the same roof because the instinct of a domesticated farm animal like a cow or ox makes it fear a naturally wild meat-eater like a pig to the extent that the proximity of a pig can curdle a cow's milk.

Although Pinky is a reminder of Haven's grim occupation as a pig slaughterer, she is also the symbol of hope for the family's financial improvement, for she appears to have great potential as a brood sow that could produce up to two dozen marketable piglets each year. As Mr. Tanner tells Rob, "That's dollars, boy. Dollars you can pay off this farm with. Good solid Yankee dollars that you can bank" (p. 123). Ironically, it is Pinky's inability to reproduce that leads to the novel's sad climax.

Pinky is also Peck's vehicle for showing the interdependence of the Vermont farmers of the 1920's. When she shows no estrus well after the time she should have come into heat, Neighbor Tanner brings to the Peck farm his prize boar Samson to provide stud service to encourage her maturity into a lucrative brood sow. While there, he voices his concern for Haven's apparent failing health, mentions his former close ties with the Pecks, and encourages Rob to "man the place" so Haven can get a reprieve from so many years of hard work. He is also there at Haven's funeral to reassure Rob by accepting him as an equal farmer and to offer assistance in running the farm if needed. It is that confidence and reassurance that helps the boy become the man of the family and "do what's got to be done."

About midway through the novel, Peck uses Pinky's need for a bath to enable Rob to hear neighborhood gossip and thus to allow the reader to get a fuller picture than a twelve-year-old can provide of some of the minor characters. As Rob scrubs his pet outside the open kitchen window, he overhears his mother and aunt inside discussing the rumor that a close neighbor, Widow Bascom, has been heard laughing with her hired hand late at night "and there weren't a light burning in the whole house" (p. 77). Besides providing delightful comic relief directly after the grisly scene in which Haven helps a neighbor with a guilty conscience dig up and claim the tiny coffin of his illegitimate baby daughter, the gossip also enables Rob's mother, Lucy Peck, to reveal in charming Vermont dialect that under her solemn, "no frills" gray dress, this Shaker lady is still a warm, compassionate, and probably passionate woman. After implying that she too enjoys laughing in the dark with her man, she concludes the scene with, "And if Iris Bascom and her man giggle in the dark, they can have my blessing for whatever it's worth" (p. 78). Probably no twelve-year-old of Rob's era would, except by such an accident, have been apt to observe and interpret those very personal attributes of his own mother that reveal her as the well-rounded character that she is in the novel.

In the very next paragraph, Pinky is once again the key link in the narrative, for Rob explains, "As I sat there on the bench outside, trying to rub the clay off Pinky, I got to thinking about my own run-in with Widow Bascom." He briefly describes a scene in which she whacked him and his buddy with a broom for running through her strawberry patch, and then he tells about a second, more recent meeting during which he chatted amiably with her and Ira Long, the hired man, and then told them how much he wished he could show Pinky at the upcoming Rutland Fair. When Iris later tells Mrs. Tanner about that, she sets in motion the wheels for the Tanners to invite Rob (and the reader) to go with them to the fair. Rob is still scrubbing Pinky a few minutes later when his father arrives, teases him about washing the pig so much, and then gives him permission to go where Haven has never been in sixty years—the Rutland Fair. That night while Rob is preparing to sleep in the corn cratch with his super-clean pet, he confides to her his conclusion (and Peck's) about the widow's conduct: "Pinky, having a big hired man around like Ira may be sinful. But I say the Widow Bascom is some improved" (p. 84).

Sending Pinky with Rob to the Rutland Fair provides Peck with several additional opportunities to include in his novel important bits of humor, local color, and more of the technology of the 1920's. Just before involving the reader in parading around the sawdust ring with Rob to show Mr. Tanner's prize oxen, Peck teaches another how-to lesson, this time about the crude flash photography of that era. As Rob tells it, "We spent the better part of an hour getting our picture took. The man who owned the camera got up under a big black tent. His wife held a funny looking geegaw up in the air. It looked like some sort of snow shovel to me. But it was the first snow shovel I ever see explode. You never saw such a bang of

light on a cloudy day in your life" (p. 89). At the fair Peck also shows Mr. Tanner's deep feelings for Rob when he helps him bathe the dung-covered Pinky and then when he lovingly cares for the boy after Rob throws up on the judge's shoe and then faints during the pig judging.

Occasionally Peck uses Pinky as Rob's pupil in order to include interesting legends and folklore of rural Vermont. At one point Rob gives Pinky (and us) a history lesson about Robert Rogers, after whom Rob was named, and his daring escape from the Iroquois Indians near Lake George in nearby New York. On another occasion Rob gives a hilarious, confused account of the most famous Vermonter, Ethan Allen, and his baseball team, the Green Mountain Boys. Like many twelve-year-olds, Rob usually manages to take bits from unrelated events and wind them neatly together into his personal view of the situation, much to the delight of the reader who knows the real story.

It is also with Pinky that Rob (and the reader) enjoys rolling in the soft purple clover covering the beautiful Vermont countryside, sucking the sugary nectar from a clover flower shoot, and watching a hawk soar high overhead and then suddenly drop "fast as a stone" to attack a rabbit nearby. When the victim's death cry is so "full of pity that it even made Pinky get to her feet" (p. 62), the sensory effect is dramatized, and we hear it too.

Pinky's main mission, of course, is to be the instrument of Rob's rapid maturation that thirteenth year. Appropriately, the name of this Vermont town is Learning. As the novel begins, Rob is an irresponsible child who runs away from school during recess because another boy has made fun of his handmade Shaker clothing. As soon as Pinky arrives, however, Rob takes on the responsibility of providing her food and care and thus begins to mature. Within a few months he is learning the realities of animal husbandry and the money it can bring: a pig is more than a pet to a man. When two futile matings prove Pinky is barren at a time when the Peck family desperately needs food, Rob must endure the agony of having to hold his beloved pet still while his father slaughters it. As Rob sobs and looks down at the "sopping wet lake of red slush" (p. 129) that was Pinky, Haven Peck answers the thematic question, "What does it take to be a man?" With his big, rough, cold hand "dripping with pig blood," he touches the boy's cheek, trying to wipe away the tears, and he says, "But I'm thankful you're a man . . . That's what being a man is all about, boy. It's just doing what's got to be done." With his free hand he wipes away his own tears. Pinky's death thus provides the impetus for the only physical show of affection and tears Rob ever sees from his proud Shaker father, who, he knows, is dying. The proof of the boy's achievement of manhood is evident that May morning five months later when, at the tender age of thirteen years and three months, he finds his father's body, handles the funeral arrangements, digs the grave in the orchard, gives the eulogy, and then takes over the farm chores. When his aging mother tells him before the funeral that she is glad to have him to handle the arrangements

because she could not do it alone, he sounds just like Haven when he replies, "Yes, you could, Mama. When you're the only one to do something, it always gets done" (p. 133).

A Day No Pigs Would Die is an ideal novel for class study in grade eight, nine, or ten for many reasons. First, the brief, episodic chapters lend themselves to convenient homework assignments easy to discuss the next day in class with a slow or average group. The brevity and quick pace of the novel also lend themselves to a one-sitting first reading for a faster class. The relaxed, conversational style makes the story deceptively simple, but upon closer examination the careful reader begins to discover the wealth of underlying implications and deeper meanings.

A Day No Pigs Would Die is also a perfect instrument for teaching or reinforcing a study of the elements of fiction, such as characterization, plot structure, integral setting, theme, and point of view. Each of these elements is so carefully crafted that this novel could become the standard for other novels studied by the class.

The book's language is another fertile field of study. Besides providing a flavor of the often ungrammatical, rural Vermont dialect of the 1920's (e.g., "het up," "mirthful," "her hindquarters sort of hunkered down"), it is full of sensory-rich figurative language. The frequent similes are delightfully fresh and certainly appropriate for these rural speakers (e.g., "The valley yellow like golden rod. Like somebody broke eggs over the hillside" p. 108). Fresh metaphors are also frequent (e.g., "The hawk was pasted against a cloud" p. 61). The rich multisensory images in every chapter are also apt expressions for a bright twelve-year-old narrator who is very aware of the sights, sounds, textures, and smells around him, and they encourage the reader to experience the story vicariously (e.g., The cemetery mud "frosted the wheels like they was cake, and it sucked your boots. Made you feel you were standing in syrup," pp. 70-71). Other poetic devices such as personification, onomatopoeia, and alliteration also abound.

Students do enjoy humor in novels, and it is frequent and delightful in *A Day No Pigs Would Die*. Usually it is the result of Peck's filtering the story through the perspective of an inexperienced 1920's farm boy narrator to the sophisticated 1980's reader. When Rob tries, for example, to figure out the meaning of words new to him like *restroom*, *pervert* , and *tutor* and then relates them erroneously to humorous characters and events mentioned earlier, the reader laughs aloud.

Another reason that *A Day No Pigs Would Die* is so useful for class study is that its adult/adolescent relationships are consistently wholesome, realistic, and sensitively drawn. The love and respect shared by Rob and his father are especially poignant; each understands the other's feelings, role, and needs. Rob's relationship with his good neighbor, Mr. Tanner, is also one of love and respect. Tanner's efficient, productive farm and his wise stewardship of it become the boy's model for future success. Rob's relationships with the women in the novel are also warm, respectful, and meaningful. Since the reader tends to like and respect him, Rob can serve

as an effective, credible role-model, which is not a feature that is common in much of the adolescent fiction available today.

It is amazing that such a relatively brief book can be so loaded with literary worth, wholesome values, and believable characters as well as a theme meaningful to most adolescents—the tough passage from childhood to maturity. Pinky's tale would certainly be a worthy addition to (perhaps replacement of) some of the traditional but often out-of-date novels studied in junior high school that do not speak to today's youth nearly as well.

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A Hero Still Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich

Lynn Newbury

Benjie Johnson:

Man, I'm twenty-five now. I'm mighty glad I made it, but there's times I wished Butler just dropped me offa that roof edge. It's been a long road but I made it. Thassa trip. Kickin' ain't fun and I only got worse before I got better. Butler was right when he told me you gotta believe in youtself, can't nobody else believe in you for you. No one else gonna keep your veins clean, dig? Butler believed in me when I was fixin' at thirteen but I wasn't ready yet—to believe in myself, I mean. I broke his heart and Mama's heart again and again until they near cut me loose and put me out on the street. I came neat bein' put in that detention place but I got lucky.

When I was 'most sixteen," I got hold of a hot shot and ended up in the hospital and then in another detox program. After detox I was in some fancy rehab program before they even let me leave. Man, I didn't like everyone watchin' me so close like. When I got home, Butler and Mama looked like they just wasn't gonna put up with no more trouble from me. Somehow bein' clean just stuck that time. I saw I was drivin' those folks crazy, them tryin' to forgive me and understand me while all's I did was keep makin' mistakes. I guess I just grew up then. There I was, a junkie at sixteen and I said "Dammit Benjie, straighten up. Shake it." And I did.

So now I'm workin' with thirteen-year-olds just like me. Man, it's like lookin' into a mirror—those boys shootin' skag, lookin' old and used up 'fore their time. I guess I be lucky if I help two or three of 'em. I ain't had no formal trainin' or nothin' like that but I know the junk. 'Cause I did it. Thassa fact. I did the stuff.

Alice Childress' novel *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* is now twelve years old, but it is not in the least outdated. This stark and virtually hopeless glimpse of a young drug user is thoroughly realistic, but it is Childress' sensitivity which has rendered this book transcendent of time. The drug problem has not disappeared from our streets; in fact, it has grown worse and is now a national concern. On a more fundamental level, however, people's emotions have not changed; and herein lies the appeal of Childress' young adult novel. Childress captures the pain of Benjie's mother and grandmother, the anger and frustration of Butler, and the honesty of Jimmy-Lee. The emotions evoked in this book are universal, and they are especially valid reactions to Benjie's problem. Drug addiction tears people apart, both family and friends. *A Hero* can be widely applied because of its human element. Thanks to this element, *A Hero Ain't Nothin'*

Lynn Newbury was a student in a course in literature for adolescents when she wrote this article on A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich.

But a Sandwich will continue to be read by adolescents and adults for years to come.

Although Childress' novel raises eyebrows, it is nevertheless an educationally valuable tool. Teachers and parents may not at first realize the total worth of this book, and they may yank it from the classroom because of the profanity and the graphic discussion of narcotics. However, doing so would be a mistake. As one who has lived with heroin addiction in my family, I would fight to keep this book in junior high school classrooms. *A Hero Still Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* is one hundred percent realistic with just the correct amount of hope: almost none. But this book makes a strong impression which could influence a few lives. It can only change lives, however, if adolescents read it.

One important point that needs to be taught along with this book is that drug addiction is not only a ghetto concern. Heroin use does not belong exclusively to skid row bums in Harlem. The publicity of late on the widespread use of cocaine among executives, sports figures, and housewives has raised awareness about drug abuse. However, heroin is *still* kept behind closed doors. Heroin addiction is found in upper, middle, and lower classes and in rural, urban and suburban surroundings. Adolescents need to be given this information so that they may be less vulnerable. Drug addiction is a very sensitive topic but one which we cannot afford to keep in the closet.

Another aspect of the book which needs to be highlighted by educators is that vulnerability is not only a result of what types of people one "hangs around with." Association *is* a large part of the drug culture, but it not the deciding factor. Rather, drug reliance occurs as a result of a poor self-image, and we see this cause-effect relation in Benjie. His problems are typical, but he does not view them as such. Thus, he reacts differently than the average adolescent. Jimmy-Lee has more self-respect, and he tries to infuse Benjie with it. However, Benjie has neither the courage nor the value for his own life that is necessary to kick his habit. He is willing to waste his life because he feels it is insignificant. Adolescents today often feel this way. They are in a "no man's land" with the stress always on growing up faster. Adolescents must be taught that it is okay to be thirteen.

Jimmy-Lee expresses the difficulty of being an adolescent. He talks about the need to get away: "I gotta get a divorce from my parents, my neighborhood, my school, and my old buddies, so I can think or not think for two-three weeks. Could I come in without a habit or bein' in bad with the law?" Jimmy-Lee realizes that it is okay to be hurting. As M. E. Kerr put it in her novel *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, "You don't have to shoot smack to have problems." It is normal to have problems and to need to get away. Adolescents should not be taught that they must be happy all the time. Jimmy-Lee's insight is one which many adolescents never reach.

Yet another factor which should be impressed upon students reading *A Hero* is that there *is* help to be found. There is hope even when statistics would seem to indicate otherwise. Many schools are incorporating

intervention programs that attempt to identify students who are "at risk" for drug and alcohol abuse. There are peer counselors to be found along with professional counselors. There are telephone hot-lines and free clinics as well as private clinics. Adolescents should be made aware of the available help and should also be made to realize that one slip can be easily corrected. Drug use is not an "all or nothing" problem. You can always get out.

Finally, *A Hero* should be accompanied by a factual unit on narcotics. All young adults, even the street-smart ones, have misinformation about drugs. Adolescents should be spoken to by an ex-addict. Educators should not spare them the gory details. Drugs are too often glamorized, and we must expose our adolescents to the bitter irony of drug abuse. People continue to believe that drugs will help to solve their problems, when, in effect, they simply aggravate them. Our culture revolves around dependencies, dependencies on coffee, cigarettes, or heroin. Adolescents must be taught to rely on themselves as opposed to foreign substances.

Thus, we should embrace Alice Childress' novel ***A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*** and put it to work for us. The book's value lies in its sensitive treatment of the taboo topic of drugs. Childress does not equivocate, and this hard-line approach is just what today's adolescents need. In an era of ambiguous values and norms, more and more Americans are turning to drugs. This novel is the perfect way to initiate a serious discussion among teenagers of the hazards of drug use.

A Look at Foster Care in *The Great Gilly Hopkins*

Phyllis Stokes

Growing up can be a painful experience for many adolescents, but especially for young people who are not living in the traditional family setting of natural parents and siblings. Katherine Paterson's novel, *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (Avon, 1979), is about a few weeks in the life of a foster child who has grown up in several different foster homes but still waits for her natural mother to claim her. Having been a foster mother myself for almost ten years, I was curious to examine Paterson's fictional treatment of this special adolescent situation for realism or potential sensationalism: I found much of the former and none of the latter. Paterson's novel blends the beauty of a child discovering her ability to love with the turmoil of a very unusual family unit. Gilly's delightful personality radiates through the sad story of her life situation, giving the reader hope that Gilly will persevere long enough to heal herself of her past wounds.

Gilly is the synthesis of foster children—believable in her hostile attitude, her naive faith in her natural mother's concern for her, her independent sense of humor, her pain and struggle for survival, and her ultimate giving of love to her new foster family. While she is very much a normal child with her delight in fanciful thoughts and mental word play, her reactions and interactions exemplify the psychological intensity that is present daily in the life of a child who has been denied the stability and comfort of a loving, dependable home. Gilly lives with the ever present knowledge that, for some reason she does not even know, her mother chose not to be her mother; and this painful thought is deep in her unconscious all the time, every day, ceaselessly. She has learned to insulate herself from a reality that hurts her, to strike out at others before they mentally knock her down, and to convince herself that she is stronger than the forces that control her present, plan her future, or are responsible for her past.

One advantage we, the readers, have in getting to know Gilly is the fact that Paterson has allowed us access to Gilly's feelings and stream of consciousness, an access to knowledge rarely available to the real life foster mother. Typical older foster children are reticent and unwilling to express feelings or thoughts. Their actions and reactions, their facial expressions and body language, their overt performances at school, and their behavior with others are the only data we can interpret to understand the workings of a particular child. In the story of Gilly, we do not question the validity

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of our interpretation of her because we hear what she thinks and feels and eventually how she loves, all in her own thought processes.

When Gilly is introduced to us, she is moving again to a new foster home. Gilly has lived with four different families since she was placed in protective custody at the age of three, and she is one tough kid, or so she wants the world to think. She displays a critical attitude toward everything and everyone new. She repels overtures of kindness with rude comments and drives others away who do not measure up to her expectations. She tests her control over her new environment and begins to discover the weak points of those in authority. We sometimes forget the shocking fact that these characteristics belong to a child who is only eleven years old.

Gilly exhibits anger and negative attitudes toward her new foster mother, Maime Trotter, by yelling to her the first night that she will not help with supper. Gilly delights in tormenting William Ernest, an abused foster child with learning disabilities, who also lives with Mrs. Trotter. The first day at the new school Gilly refuses to return a basketball to a group of boys and ends up successfully fighting all six of them at one time. Gilly sends an insulting original greeting card to her new teacher, Miss Harris, who is the only black teacher she has ever had, in an attempt to make her mad.

This negative behavior is rooted in fear and anger. Ner Littner, who has written about foster children and their special needs in *Some Traumatic Effects of Separation and Placement*, states that hostility is a traumatic effect of separation from previous foster parents and of the initial separation from the natural mother. The child has to learn to master "the painful feelings . . . of abandonment, of helplessness and of anger" (p. 10). The placement with the new parent, Trotter, as Gilly calls her, poses the problem to Gilly that threatens other foster children: will my new parents keep me, and, if so, how long; or will I be rejected, again? Gilly must deal with residual separation anxiety that has applied itself in layers, one coat for every foster home placement, besides the initial separation anxiety when her birth mother gave her up eight years ago.

The anxiety manifests itself in Gilly's simply being mad. She is mad at former foster mothers who gave her back to county social services. When the Dixons moved to Florida, she "was put out like the rest of the trash they left behind." She is mad at new foster mothers who still are not her natural mother. "The look on Trotter's face was the one Gilly had, in some deep part of her, longed to see all her life, but not from someone like Trotter." She is mad at teachers who do not treat her with special attention or respond to her power struggles. "She was not used to being treated like everyone else. Ever since the first grade, she had forced her teachers to make a special case of her." She is mad at other kids at school who may be potential friends who will have to be left behind when it is time to move again and who may have natural mothers at home. "Why did it have to be so hard? Other kids could be with their mothers all the

time." She is mad at herself for being the kind of kid whose mother does not want to live with her. Gilly thought of her mother, "If she knew what I was like, she'd never come." She is mad basically at her whole world. "It wasn't fair—nothing was fair."

Gilly wants her life ordered, and her attitude toward cleanliness reflects this need. Before she sits down at the new foster home, she rids the area of dust. "Gilly took one of the pillows off the couch and used it to wipe every trace of dust off the piano bench before sitting down on it." She thinks of the Trotter house as being "an ugly, dirty house," compared to the previous foster home of the Nevinses' which had been "dustless." Meeting Agnes for the first time on the playground, Gilly notices "how dirty her fingernails were." As she searches Mr. Randolph's library for his poetry book, she begins to straighten the shelves without thinking. "It bothered her to have everything in a muddle."

Foster children who are victims of child abuse and/or neglect and who have been shifted from one foster home to another will often feel manipulated and out of control of their own lives. They will attempt to control their own environment through power struggles, open defiance of authorities, manipulation of others, and intimidation of weaker acquaintances. Gilly asserts her independence by refusing to wear a coat the first night she walks next door to get Mr. Randolph, an elderly black man who eats dinner with Trotter. When Gilly fights with the boys on the playground the first day of school, she is sent to the principal's office, where she stares down the administrator with confidence. "People hated that—you staring them down as though they were the ones who had been bad. They didn't know how to deal with it. Sure enough. The principal looked away first." The first night's dinner has Gilly calculating how to act so as to be safe. She "thought it better not to seem to enjoy her supper too much." She discovers how protective Trotter is of William Ernest and sees this tendency as her inside control over her new foster mother. "Power over the boy was sure to be power over Trotter in the long run." When Agnes approaches Gilly at school, calling her by name, Gilly thinks "this girl had power over her" because she, Gilly, did not know the other girl's name. Later, when Agnes tells Gilly that both of them get free lunch, Gilly decides "The first thing she was going to teach Agnes Stokes was when to keep her big mouth shut."

Gilly believes she has to be tough to survive, and maybe she is right. Self-preservation accounts for the survival of many abused and neglected children, and Gilly protects herself with a layer of toughness which she tries to use to stay in control of her life. She brags in the beginning that "I am not nice. I am brilliant. I am famous across this entire county. Nobody wants to tangle with the great Galadriel Hopkins. I am too clever and too hard to manage. Gruesome Gilly, they call me." After the social worker has left Gilly at Trotter's home, Gilly thinks that she can "stand anything . . . as long as she was in charge." She verbally intimidates Agnes in unkind

taunts at lunch. "You know, don't you, Agnes, it makes me sick just looking at you?"

Being tough and mean and unlovable is a form of defense that many foster children wear against becoming close to new family members and friends. Littner says that "By making the new foster parents angry, he causes them to withdraw and reject him; which in turn provides him with an excuse to be angry back at them" (p. 19). Gilly does not want to face rejection again, although she represses these feelings with her tough routine. She would rather be the one hurting than the one being hurt. By creating an immediate confrontation for which she can openly feel responsible, she also creates an object for repressed guilt from her mother's rejection of her many years ago.

An interesting battle rages between Gilly and others over the use of her name. During the trip to Trotter's home, Miss Ellis, the social worker, refers to her as "Gilly." "My name," Gilly said between her teeth, "is Galadriel." When the new teacher, Miss Harris, asks to call her Galadriel, Gilly yells at her to call her "Gilly." As Gilly meets Mr. Randolph for the first time, however, she tells him that her name is Gilly.

The responses to both Miss Ellis and Miss Harris of conflicting name usage are only plays for power. Gilly wants to be in control of the situation. The name itself is not the issue: who controls the name is the important thing. Gilly has nothing to prove to Mr. Randolph, nor does she feel threatened in any way by him, so she can naturally respond with the name she used.

I think there may be a bit more to Gilly's strong reaction to her teacher's using the complete name of Galadriel. The one photograph Gilly possesses of her natural mother, the picture so delicately described by Paterson, is probably Gilly's prized possession. It has been packed and unpacked just as her brown suitcase has, too many times. "She never knew if she'd be in a place long enough to make it worth the bother," Gilly says as she took out the photograph. Her mother's eyes "laughed up at her as they always did." Gilly considers this photograph the only affirmation that she, indeed, has a real mother.

Gilly's impressions of her mother's picture are idealistic: "glossy black hair in gentle waves without a hair astray. She looked as though she was the star of some TV show . . . even the teeth were gorgeous." There are two names on this photograph. One is her mother's name on a "little piece of tape," which in its impersonal and removable state is a sad testament to the only identification of the mother. The other name is written in the corner, as a salutation or dedication, "For my beautiful Galadriel." Gilly cherishes this picture in its pasteboard frame as a sign from her mother that she is a beloved daughter. Gilly wants no one else to call her Galadriel.

I have unpacked many a brown paper bag which contains all the material possessions of foster children who have been placed in our home. Each child has at least one item, usually a picture or a special toy or book, with a dirty, sticky piece of masking tape attached, bearing a name. Sadness

wells up in me to think that a child's total existence can be identified and affirmed by a piece of tape on one cherished possession which is that child's only proof of his past. Katherine Paterson captures the pathos of what the picture means to Gilly and how Gilly still holds on to the hope that her mother still loves her. This holding on to a memory or, in Gilly's case, a possession associated with a loved one no longer around is one of the characteristics of the grieving process involved in dealing with separation and loss of parents. Claudia Jewett details the complete grieving process in her book, *Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss*. She compares the feeling of loss that foster children experience every time they move to a new foster home with the feelings of grief that natural children (and adults, too) must deal with when confronted with the death of a loved one. Ms. Jewett states that in the first stage of early grief, the child will deny that the parent is gone, believing that Mother will return. The child will cherish mementos, letters, and pictures, just as Gilly does (p. 29).

Other characteristics of a grieving child are seen in Gilly's behavior and thought processes. During the shock reaction to a separation, foster children will think the separation will be short lived and will engage in magical thinking, which is the first stage of processing life through the senses instead of the intellect (Jewett, p. 7). As with Gilly, the children consider themselves to be the center of the universe and believe that they cause whatever happens in their lives. This magical thinking will reappear in times of crisis.

Gilly interprets her world in a magical way when she thinks that her mother, Courtney, will send for her when knowledge of her new foster home environment reaches California, where Courtney lives. Shocked by the unusual mixture of family members and neighbors in her new home, Gilly tells herself that she should write her mother. "Courtney . . . would probably sue county welfare if she knew what kind of place they'd forced her daughter to come to." And later, "She'll come to get me then, for sure . . . Her mother wouldn't stand for her beautiful Galadriel to be in a dump like this for one single minute, once she knew." As she drops off to sleep that first night with Trotter, Gilly promises herself "for the millionth time" that she will find her mother, write her, and "tell her to come and take her beautiful Galadriel home."

This magical thinking, states Jewett, occurs throughout the grieving process. During the second phase of mourning, the child moves through a period of "yearning and pining" (Jewett, p. 33). Gilly fantasizes her own happy ending: "She would knock on the door, and her mother would open it. And Courtney would throw her arms around her and kiss her all over her face and never let her go." There is a conflict between her desire to hold on to the dream and her need to relinquish the past. Gilly "put her head down and began to cry. She didn't mean to, but it was so unfair. She hadn't even seen her mother since she was three years old. Her beautiful mother who missed her so much and sent her all her love."

By the time Gilly's maternal grandmother appears at Thanksgiving, Gilly

has grown to love Trotter, Mr. Randolph, and especially William Ernest. She is now torn between the new feelings of acceptance and love for her foster family and this little old woman who is a thread to her mother, Courtney. Gilly's familiar imagined ending to her foster care surfaces again. "It was not at all the way she'd imagined the ending. In Gilly's story Courtney herself came sweeping in like a goddess queen, reclaiming the long-lost princess. There was no place in this dream for dumpy old-fashioned ladies. . . or blind old black men . . . or crazy, heart-ripping little guys. . ." Gilly has finally learned to love and to accept love, and she has to reconcile these new positive sensations with her imagined fairy tale ending.

For so many foster children, just when circumstances are calming down, emotions are leveling, and the children are learning how to love and be loved, something will happen to threaten the precarious self-image that has slowly been strengthening. We hurt for Gilly because we recognize her happiness and know what she has suffered in the past. What Gilly learns about her grandmother, though, will heal the last wound of having to leave Trotter's home. Even if it is not with her mother in the happy ending of her dreams, Gilly is with her family. She and her grandmother have shared the common experience of having lost Courtney, and Gilly respects the independent spunk her Nonnie exhibits to townspeople. Gilly will grow to love her grandmother, from whom she has inherited her outspoken nature and inner strength. Gilly will be loved, comforted, and protected by her own natural family, and it will be a forever family, never to be taken from her again.

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The Black Woman: A Focus on "Strength of Character" in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Shirley J. (S. J.) Cordell

It has been said that a black woman has two strikes against her—being a woman and being born black. Alice Childress in an article in *Freedomways* (Volume 6, Number 1, Winter 1966) gives substance to this remark when she says that "the American Negro woman has been *particularly* and deliberately oppressed, in slavery and up to and including the present moment, above and beyond the general knowledge of the American citizen." Mary Helen Washington further states ("Black Women Image Makers," *Black World*, August, 1974) that "in approaching the question of the Black woman's image in the media and in literature, one's first impulse is to carefully scrutinize those negative and false depictions of the Black woman . . . [we] are all so familiar with—the tragic mulatto, the hot-blooded exotic whore, the strong black mammy . . . ."

It is not difficult then to surmise that the black woman has experienced and continues to experience character portrayal in literature and the media as sexual or matriarchal stereotypes, void of femininity, domineering, and lacking humaneness. To combat these pervasive depictions, numerous black authors, particularly the more contemporary, have worked to examine and eradicate the stereotyping of black women. Washington in the aforementioned article supports this contention by an implied prediction that writers like Alice Walker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, Ann Petry, Maya Angelou, and others have portrayed in their works "images of the Black woman so powerful and realistic that they can combat whatever stereotypes of Black women that still persist."

One notable technique to channel positive image projection of black women is through realistic characterization. This technique is attained in one of the most effective selections by and about black women, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou.

Numerous critics collectively hail this work as not only a use of language, but also containing character portrayals of great strength and human dimension. What Angelou does is to elevate the image of herself and the

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black women in her life by telling her story using episodic details to illuminate personal and historical identity as well as give shape and meaning to the experiences from which that identity has evolved. Angelou's reality becomes the reality for many. Her "quest after self-acceptance," as one critic termed it, is the story line in the first of her series of autobiographical endeavors.

Maya Angelou's story begins with a journey. Her brother Bailey and she are traveling cross-country from California to Arkansas to live with their grandmother, a central figure who is to teach Maya perhaps the greatest lesson, that of character strength. "Momma" welcomes these three- and four-year-olds, and during the next five years, she attunes them to Southern living for blacks.

From Stamps, Arkansas, Maya and Bailey are taken back to St. Louis, Missouri, to live with their mother's family. This life-style is very different from the previous one. Living is fast paced, and mother, grandmother, aunts, and uncles are the kind that exude family closeness and a sense of protection. It is in St. Louis, however, that Maya experiences the greatest degradation that any person can: she is raped by her mother's boyfriend, and for a child of eight, the results are confusing as well as frightening.

From St. Louis, Maya and her brother are sent back to their grandmother's in Stamps and remain there until she is thirteen. Maya's existence is lifeless (she refers to it as "an old biscuit, dirty and inedible") until she meets Mrs. Bertha Flowers who was deemed "the aristocrat of black Stamps." Maya says that this woman threw her her first life line. Maya's love of reading begins early, having read Shakespeare and others at six, but Mrs. Flowers nurtures this love of reading and channels Maya to realms that even Momma found difficult to penetrate.

One of Maya's strongest moments of self-realization occurs while she is working for a white woman. Black children, and adults as well, are supposed to know "their place" in Stamps; but through a quiet emergence, Maya has assumed (by actions and reactions of her grandmother) the kind of subtlety she needed to rise above any feeling of inadequacy. The white woman continually refuses to call Maya's name correctly. During her tenure of work, Maya resolves the problem with Mrs. Cullinan. At Bailey's suggestion, she purposely breaks the woman's "Virginia China." When Mrs. Cullinan confronts Maya, she lashes out in anger because she has been accurately accused.

Later in the story, Maya experiences normal adolescent involvement. She finds a best friend, and she has her first crush. There are also sporadic remembrances of her molestation, but she is able to rechannel the negative implications. Maya launches herself into her schooling and graduates at twelve at the top of her eighth grade class. During the graduation ceremonies, Maya is able to put her heritage in perspective after an uninvited white official addresses the audience and relegates the lives of blacks in Stamps to aspirations such as maids, farmers, and other manservants. She has learned to be competitive, and this attitude will follow her to California

and later enable her to vie for a position as a trolley car driver—the first black on the San Francisco streetcars.

The remaining sojourn of Maya includes her return to the West Coast where she lives with both parents, attends school, and shares in many experiences. One person, in particular, impresses Maya. Miss Kirwin, one of Maya's teachers, encourages her intellect and whets her dramatic appetites.

The story line is one of the book's major strengths, but Maya's understanding of certain characters' roles in her life is as true to the nurturing of children today as it was then: "The allegiances I owed at this time in my life would have made very strange bedfellows: Momma with her solemn determination . . . my mother and her gaiety, Miss Kirwin and her information . . . ."

Momma's strength as Maya perceives it is based on fantasy, but the dream will be tested in Chapter 24. The fantasy Maya envisions is needed to create a mechanism that will allow her to cope with racism. Maya has a painful toothache and Momma tries to convince the white dentist to pull the tooth. His response is what Maya needs to understand Momma's strength. "Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's." Maya fantasizes Momma's setting him straight and ordering him out of town by sundown. But as Momma explains it, she is aware of her powerlessness and she is cunning enough to wrangle $10 from the dentist to take Maya to the black dentist miles away. This kind of strength is antithetical to stereotypes of the matriarchal black woman.

Another character who influences Maya with her beauty and certainty is her mother Vivian Baxter. It may seem somewhat paradoxical that Maya can love and admire the mother who sent her to live with her grandmother. An examination of Vivian's characterization in the book reveals that Maya respected her mother's enthusiasm for life. The fact that she does not rear her children and that she lives her life socializing does not diminish her love for her children. As in the lives of others, some women simply cannot rear children, and they may or may not admit to this characteristic. Vivian clearly has an unusual understanding of herself.

Maya learns from the women in her life, and her quest of self-realization is only begun in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. She comes to grips with the beauty of her existence, not in terms of physical attributes, but in terms of love and loyalty to herself and to the other persons who helped to give meaning to her life.

In examining book reviews and critical evaluations, I found evaluators and critics to be more than generous in their praise of this work. They attest to Angelou's ability as a skillful writer because of the power of her images and the richness of the language. George E. Kent in *Phylon* (June, 1975) states that "Maya excels in portraits. No character becomes less than a well-etched type . . . ."

When a work such as *Caged Bird* is reprinted innumerable times, the literary merit of it should be clear to most. However, some may find Maya's work objectionable, mainly because of the explicit descriptions during the

period Maya experiences physical abuse. The language, too, may border on vulgarity for some. These aspects may have to be considered by teachers since use of the book with students may be met with opposition. If such opposition should occur, the fact that overt child abuse continues to be rampant in our society should be reason enough to defend the book. Maya's revelation of this most abhorrent act is not dwelled upon unnecessarily, and it is used to give her strong human dimensions. She never hates Mr. Freeman. Indeed, she seems to have forgiven him in the innocence she regained. She goes on with her life because there were people who supported her and helped her to find that strength that makes her the outstanding writer she has become.

POLL OF ENGLISH TEACHING PROFESSION PINPOINTS UNFINISHED BUSINESS FOR EDUCATION

Are teachers of English and the language arts encouraged by current efforts to improve education? Or does the prospect of improved conditions for their teaching remain largely unfulfilled?

Results of a survey of members of the National Council of Teachers of English from all levels of education show that teachers think the problem of improving public support and respect for education will remain the issue of most concern to teachers of English throughout the next five years. Two issues tied for second place among concerns of the profession: improving working conditions and teachers' morale, and improving the teaching of writing.

Reducing class sizes and workloads for the teaching of English came next on the NCTE members' list of unresolved issues affecting their professional lives. Fifth on their list of unfinished business for the coming years is improving the teaching of reading. The survey, conducted before the end of the 1985-86 academic year, included NCTE members from all levels of education.

The NCTE member survey also asked teachers about their level of satisfaction with their chosen profession. If members were preparing for a career today, would they again opt to be teachers of English?

Overall, 52.7 percent of these teachers said yes; 47.3 percent said no. The largest proportion of "yes" responses came from college teachers (59.8 percent). The largest proportion of "no's" (57.1 percent) came from elementary language arts teachers. Among secondary school English teachers, "yes" edged out "no," with 52.4 percent of respondents saying they would again choose to teach and 47.6 percent saying no.

The remarks these teachers of English made about teaching as a career show that practical considerations such as low pay, a fluctuating job market, and a dearth of opportunity for professional growth often conflict with teachers' fondness for their subject matter and for working with young people.

A Reading of *Hamlet*: An Experiment in Personalized "New Criticism"

Ronald J. Goba

Some readers aim to discover what's there on the page; such readers talk and write about "IT," usually, in an arid and remote way that often seems stylistically suffocating. Other readers aim to discover what's inside themselves as they respond to the page; such readers talk and write about "I," usually, in a breezy and involved way that often seems stylistically glib. Given these two extremes, I want to share a reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that fuses "IT" and "I" responses, deliberately ignoring the question: which comes first? Since the play is called *Hamlet*, let me start with Hamlet himself.

Hamlet's first words in the play are puns: "A little more than kin, and less than kind" (Folger Library Edition, Pocket Books I,ii,68-9) and "I am too much in the sun" (I,ii,71). Hamlet is both the nephew and son of Claudius, thus: "more than kin." "More than kin" is also a direct reference to Gertrude's hasty, "incestuous" marriage to Claudius, a marriage which creates the first of three major tensions within Hamlet. Hamlet is "less than kind" because he does not fully resemble his uncle and feels unkindly (ill-disposed) toward him. "Less than kind" also reveals three additional ideas: (A) Claudius has Hamlet's throne (later, V,ii,72, Hamlet says that Claudius "Popped in between the election and my hopes"); (B) Claudius has shown irreverence to Hamlet's father by hastily marrying the dead King's wife and by hastily ending the time of grief for the dead King; (C) Shakespeare is planting a "gun that goes off" (later he will tell me about the revenge and the murder; but now he is setting me up for them). The second pun anticipates Hamlet's "antic disposition" (i.e., made mad by the sun) and Hamlet's eventual burden (i.e., the son of the dead King who requests revenge). Both puns reveal the witty Hamlet in his "inky cloak": morose, sardonic, perceptive, shrewd.

Hamlet's first soliloquy reinforces these observations while adding a second tension: Hamlet realizes that things are not what they seem to be. Like most central characters, he is aware of the dichotomy between appearance and reality. More specifically, his world is "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (I,ii,141-3). Even before the revenge motif is introduced into the play, Hamlet

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is looking for a standard or value which he can use as a basis for action. His early problems converge on this basis: The world is ambiguous and stinks; his mother married his uncle; they now live in "incestuous sheets." Confronted with this experience, what can Hamlet do? The suicide lines suggest the gravity of these problems as they eat away at Hamlet and yet something of Hamlet's perception and sensitivity.

I don't know how old Hamlet is chronologically, but psychologically he acts like a kid. And he is not unlike other literary kinds, Huck Finn, Nick Adams, Holden Caulfield, young men coming of age in a society with which they are at odds. They rebel and want to belong. But they can't come to terms with the way things are. This dangling is their hang-up. In this sense, they personify youth. I think it is important to remember that Hamlet is a kid. Shakespeare may put a ton of poetry and philosophy into his mouth, but he is still a kid. That's why he can't have the throne when his father dies, and that's why Ophelia, Laertes, Fortinbras, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are in the play. They are kids, too, working as Hamlet's counterparts. At any rate, Hamlet now has two major problems: (A) He's disturbed by Gertrude's incest; (B) He knows the world is not what it seems to be—it stinks.

To these two problems, Shakespeare adds a third: the revenge. The revenge gives Hamlet new but related problems. Simply, the incest and the haste originally merely bothers him. Now things are clearer. The Ghost tells Hamlet what he needs to know to put things together. But Hamlet is skeptical. Therefore, he doubts the Ghost. What is "its" derivation? Bernardo thinks that the Ghost's appearance is a warning of imminent danger to Denmark. Horatio first doubts that the Ghost will appear. Then he refers to "it" as an illusion. Finally, he suggests that "it" is a portent that ought to be obeyed. When the Ghost appears to Hamlet (I.iv), both Marcellus and Horatio think "it" is a spirit from Hell, and they fear "it" will seduce Hamlet into madness or death. Hamlet himself wavers in his attitude toward the Ghost. At one point, he is convinced "it" is the spirit of his dead father; at another time, he has doubts. Given his skepticism, this reaction is plausible. But action for Hamlet now means something specific: he must avenge his father's murder. To seek revenge, he must confirm the validity and virtue of the Ghost. I submit that there is something else that needs to be taken into consideration, here, if one is to understand what is happening in the play. The play does not focus exclusively upon Hamlet and the Ghost (and the revenge) but also upon Hamlet himself (that is, his attitude toward life in general and the Ghost in particular). Simply, Hamlet doesn't want to be a hero. But it's not his "thinking too precisely on the event" that makes him an anti-hero; on the contrary, it's his nature and the circumstances in the play.

Hamlet has three problems gnawing at his young albeit alert being: incest, a stinking world where appearance wars with reality, and an avengeful murder. Moreover, Hamlet stands alone as he faces the collective net of tension in his life. Simply, he is cut off from everyone else in the play;

and, although he knows that there is something rotten in Denmark (his society, his place), he also knows that he is "out of joint." Therefore, his sense of alienation and loneliness coalesces with the three problems and his hang-up is intensified.

Hamlet is alienated (at least in his own mind) from his mother and step-father, from his girlfriend (whose father is the King's right-hand man), from his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (who become spies), and occasionally from Horatio (who may only seem to be his friend). And, for the most part, only Hamlet has any real idea about what's wrong in Denmark. Horatio says of the Ghost's appearance, "This bodes some strange eruption in our state" (I,ii,81). Later, he remarks of the marriage that "it followed hard upon" (I,ii,188). But Horatio doesn't see the way Hamlet sees anymore than does Marcellus who comments: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I,iv,100). Also, when Hamlet defines man as the "quintessence of dust" (II,ii,323), Rosencrantz and Guildenstern don't seem to know what he is talking about.

But Hamlet's problem is personal in at least two other senses. One, Hamlet is a fiction. He is rare, not real. It would not be far-fetched to suggest that no youth living is really like him. Rather, Hamlet consumes something that is in each separate youth, something that probably stays even into old age. Hamlet has a delicate conscience. He has an attitude and character capable of action (revenge) but not the will to avenge his father's murder. He has suspicions of himself, the Ghost, and life that suggest not only an aspect of his blurred vision but also something of the ambiguity (and inevitability) of his destiny. In this sense, Hamlet is the consummate personification of the complicated soul enduring the pressure of life and action while simultaneously reflecting upon the problem of existence in a world which stinks and is not of his own making and with which he is at odds. If the above is not evidence enough, there is one other event in the play that (for me) clinches it: The Ghost asks only for personal revenge. And, though other people see the Ghost, only Hamlet hears "it" ask for revenge. And the revenge "it" asks for is specific: kill Claudius because he killed me. "It" doesn't ask for anything else.

It seems fairly clear to me, then, that Hamlet's involvement in the incest; the ambiguous, stinking world; the murder; and the revenge is further complicated by his status: he has only his puny self to count on in his attempt to make the good choice, if, indeed, a real alternative is available to him. In terms of the revenge, to kill Claudius is right (that is, if the Ghost can be believed); in terms of a moral choice, to kill Claudius seems to be wrong (even if the Ghost is truthful). Hamlet is deeply aware of this polarity. And he doesn't want this problem; he doesn't want to be a hero. It is no wonder, then, that Hamlet says:

> The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set right! (I,v,215-6)

This repudiation of heroism is supported by other lines in the play. In III, ii, 66-75, Hamlet praises Horatio for being impassive and praises stoicism

and the man who is not "passion's slave." But his admiration for qualities of endurance do not suggest heroic action. Also, his dread at having to act even though he is the "pipe for Fortune's finger" is hardly heroic. The hero knows that he is the antagonist of Fortune, and he willingly refuses to submit. This daring stance is the hero's great alternative when other, less-significant alternatives are not available for choice. Simply, the hero says, "I will not." When he provokes one's pity and fear, he likewise provokes one's respect and admiration (and a sense of one's own flagging dignity that conceivably can be picked up). But Hamlet continues not to will:

> . . . but heaven hath pleased it so,
> To punish me with this, and this with me,
> That I must be their scourge and minister. (III,iv,194-6)

In another place in the play (II,ii), Hamlet chides himself for not being like the player who, with only a fiction for a cause, can act while he himself has motive and cannot. True, both in this instance and in the scene with Horatio quoted above, Hamlet qualifies his remarks. I submit it is more true to say that Hamlet wavers. And I think the real point is he really doesn't know what else to do. Hamlet can say, "Let this cup pass from me"; and he can say, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"; but he cannot say, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit" and "Thy will be done." Why? Because, in this play, Hamlet can neither command his spirit nor will the Will. He makes a token gesture in this direction, but it fails. Again, why does Hamlet fail?

Hamlet has three problems that he must face alone. He must once again find a value to act; that is, he must know for sure whether or not he can believe the Ghost and thereby carry out "its" assignment. Thus, in the surface structure of the play, Hamlet must find "proof" of Claudius's guilt and, thereby, validate the Ghost's assignment and have a cause to act (to kill Claudius). But it's not so simple. Hamlet is bugged not only by his solitariness and puniness, by the derivation of the Ghost, by the dichotomy between appearance and reality in a stinking world where his mother beds with his uncle but also by the practical consequences of killing Claudius. He must find a way to kill Claudius that will avoid blame. He doesn't seem to worry about culpability regarding Polonius's death, but he does refer specifically to his blamelessness in the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. And Claudius mentions at two separate times (IV,iii,3-7 and IV,vii,18-26) that he must consider the effects that killing Hamlet or dealing harshly with him would have upon the people. Then there is the reaction of the people (IV,v,106-12) when Laertes seeks to avenge Polonius's death. Thus, the practical consequences of blame are a factor in what both Hamlet and Claudius seek to do.

There is another practical factor. Hamlet must find a way to set Denmark straight. True, Hamlet's problem is essentially personal. After all, he is alone in the play. But Hamlet's problem is remotely public. That's why Hamlet turns Denmark over to Fortinbras at the end. The play must be rounded off. But this tag-on conclusion is reminiscent of the conclusion

to *Job*. It's the end, and it's connected to the beginning, but it somehow doesn't grow out of the middle.

It seems to me that most of the actions in the play up to the "Mouse Trap" scene can be read in the light of the above observations. The "Mouse Trap" scene gives Hamlet the "proof" he needs to act. One, he gets the personal knowledge he needs. Two, Horatio becomes a kind of public witness to Claudius's guilt. Thus, the Prayer Scene is the climax of the play. But Hamlet does not kill Claudius. Why? Because Hamlet thinks it is not the right time. He doesn't want to make Claudius a martyr.

The parallels between Hamlet and the other young people in the play are important, here. First, Fortinbras is the dutiful son of his father. Second, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dull and obedient. Third, Ophelia is obeisant. This last parallel is too important to gloss over.

Ophelia will help Claudius and Polonius spy on Hamlet. Ophelia deliberately lies in the Nunnery Scene. When Hamlet asks, "Where is your father?" Ophelia makes a choice: she lies. But the dimensions of her decision are blurred by her obeisance. She's naive, and she doesn't know what's happening. Therefore, Ophelia is dumbly obedient to Polonius; Hamlet is not obedient to either King Hamlet or Claudius. Ophelia, innocent and naive, goes mad; Hamlet, clever and calculating, feigns madness. In this play, Ophelia's indiscriminate choice and lack of perception lead to her involuntary ruin. In other words, her role contrasts with Hamlet's.

Laertes, too, is significantly different than Hamlet. Laertes would "dare damnation" (IV,v,144) to revenge his father. Laertes would cut the throat of his father's murderer "i' the church!" (IV,vi,141). Hamlet, who said he would follow the Ghost to Hell, will not kill Claudius while Claudius is praying. This parallel tells me that Laertes is not as complex and complicated as Hamlet. Revenge for Laertes may not be a simple matter, but it is clear-cut. For Hamlet, revenge is neither simple nor clear-cut.

There's another reason Hamlet does not kill Claudius. This reason is connected to his not wanting to be a hero. Simply, Hamlet is not only solitary and puny; there is also something ignoble and despicable about him, something that reduces the poetry and profundity of his language to wimpish whinery. This underside of Hamlet is revealed in the actions he can perform. One, Hamlet kills impulsively as in the case of Polonius. Two, Hamlet kills deliberately as in the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Three, Hamlet is violent and rash to Ophelia in the Nunnery Scene and to Gertrude in the Closet Scene. Four, at Ophelia's grave, Hamlet claims that he loves her and then engages in a rant and rave competition with Laertes. Five, Hamlet fights the pirates and exhibits a sturdy courage that contradicts his self-image. Six, Hamlet is determined in his attempt to follow the Ghost: (A) He will follow "it" to Hell (I,ii,67-9) and (B) He actually threatens Horatio and other friends who try to deter him from following "it" (I,iv,94-5).

Other than physical and emotional prowess, what do these facts say about Hamlet? Examine his killing Polonius. Significantly, Hamlet shows no

remorse. He does say in one breath: "For this same lord, I do repent" (III,iv,192-3); however, in this expression of repentance, Hamlet is perhaps disturbed that he has killed only Polonius when he was hoping to have killed Claudius. In another series of breaths, Hamlet calls Polonius a "wretched, rash, intruding fool" (III,iv,38) and "a foolish prating knave," (III,iv,238), eventually tugging Polonius by his "end" off the stage (III,iv,240). Hamlet's lack of remorse, here, makes him odd and curious, not awesome and pitiable. Another significant aspect of Hamlet's killing Polonius is that the death is an "accident." Hamlet kills Polonius believing, or, at least, hoping, he is killing Claudius: "I took thee for thy better" (III,iv,33). If Hamlet does think that Claudius is behind the arras, then Hamlet can willfully kill Claudius, thereby fulfilling the wishes of the Ghost (his father). And, if Hamlet can kill Claudius, then the Arras Scene is shallow, for Hamlet seems childish and gutless: Hamlet can kill Claudius as Claudius hides behind a curtain in Gertrude's room and thereby avenge his father. Hardly!

Hamlet's killing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is equally disturbing, for Hamlet shows no remorse here either:

> . . . they did make love to this employment!
> They are not near my conscience; their defeat
> Does by their own insinuation grow.
> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensed points
> Of mighty opposites (V,ii,63-8)

This scene, too, is curious. Do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern know what Claudius has written in the letter? Shakespeare plays their dullness and obsequiousness against Hamlet's wit and recalcitration. Thus, they are stupid enough not to know what's in the letter (or why, for that matter, they are taking Hamlet to England) and one-dimensional enough to do precisely what they are told. Does Hamlet think they knew? He says they "made love to this employment" and that their defeat grew by "their own insinuation," but to say that they are servile and that they meddled into an affair of "mighty opposites" is hardly justification for Shakespeare's having them killed in Hamlet's place. Simply, Hamlet's killing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is beside the point. It's a neat Shakespearean trick, like Plautine substitution, but these two louts are so harmless that Hamlet comes off badly in pulling the trick off.

It's especially significant, in terms of the play's structure, that the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern happen at the point where Hamlet claims:

> . . . Rashly
> And praised to rashness for it; let us know
> Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
> When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
> There's a divinity shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will . (V,ii,7-12)

and:

> . . . is't not perfect conscience
> To quit him with an arm? And is't not be damned
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil? (V,ii,74-79)

I want to come back to these lines later; for now, they clearly conflict with Hamlet's attitude toward Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. If, from experience, Hamlet has learned to acquiesce to the "shaping divinity," then why does he have to kill Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and why is he incapable of remorse? In a world where God proposes and man disposes, Hamlet is, at this moment, strangely unorthodox.

For me, Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia and Gertrude throughout the play and especially in the Nunnery and Closet Scenes, exposes him as weak, ineffectual, and cruel. Wearing "antic disposition" is simply not cause enough to explain such behavior. True, in the Nunnery Scene, Hamlet might believe that Ophelia is in cahoots with Claudius and Polonius; therefore, he puts her (and them) on. Likewise, even though he knows that someone is behind Gertrude's arras, this awareness is no excuse for his treating Gertrude the way he does. The hero—alone, unaccommodated, naked in a world of Eckleburg-like eyes—must be made of sterner stuff. He must bear his vulnerability to the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" in a way I would want greatly to imitate. This hero ought to rise above the very things about myself that I suspect and despise. That Hamlet cannot rise above self-indulgence and self-pity makes him as petty as I. And clearly no hero.

At any rate, these incidents and the way Hamlet acts in them serve to shape his character: he is impulsive, deliberate, violent, rash, scornful, revengeful, brave, and determined. Furthermore, he has the potential and the cause to kill Claudius. If the above is not evidence enough, he himself says so clearly when he refers to himself as having cause, will, strength, and means (IV,iv,7-9). And it must be assumed, given the text of the play, that that's what the play is about: Hamlet is supposed to avenge his father's death by killing the murderer. But Hamlet does not kill Claudius, at least not until the play is just about completed, and that scene, as I hope later to show, is hardly Hamlet's moment of truth. For now, it seems that the only place in the play where Hamlet is not a man of action is in the killing of Claudius. Yet this killing is precisely what the play is supposed to be about. Now why—why doesn't Hamlet do what he's supposed to do? And why does he seem in places such as those noted to be such a brat?

That Hamlet can kill others does not mean that that he will kill Claudius. It merely means that he has the potential to kill Claudius. But, in the matter of killing Claudius, the potential is arrested by the weighty character that Hamlet bears. This weight—(A) the ability to act in some instances and (B) the inability to act in the one instance where he is specifically asked to do so—is perplexing to the reader, but it is not incomprehensible. Why? Because Hamlet acts in this play for one of two reasons. On the one hand, he acts in rage, on emotion, by impulse. On the other hand,

he acts deliberately: he thinks a thing through to its conclusions or at least knows enough about the complexity of a given action to get hung-up by it. And it's especially this deliberation, fueled by the related problems, that hangs him up in the central action, the revenge.

The irony of the Prayer Scene is a clue to Shakespeare's purpose and to what, therefore, Shakespeare will do to end his play. In the Prayer Scene, Claudius is not praying. He can't repent. Thus, Hamlet could have achieved the revenge without making Claudius a martyr. True, Hamlet doesn't know that Claudius is not praying, but I don't believe Hamlet can kill Claudius premeditatively, anyway. In this play, Hamlet can perform all actions but the Ghost's biding regarding Claudius. He has a chance, but reneges when he considers the circumstances and consequent effects. Then he utters the lines which explain his ultimate dilemma. One, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will" (V,ii,10-1). Two, he knows that his problem leads to a puzzle:

> . . . is't not perfect conscience
> To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil? (V,ii,74-9)

Three, he knows (or now is willing to accept that): "There is special / providence in the fall of a sparrow" (V,ii,218-9). And this awareness leads him to conclude: "the readiness is all" (V,ii,221). It seems, then, that Hamlet will now seek his revenge through God or, simply, leave the fate of Claudius in God's hands.

This reading is supported by the dialogue between Hamlet and Laertes that immediately follows. First, Hamlet apologizes to Horatio and claims publicly ("This presence knows") that his actions were caused by "a sore distraction." Second, he also claims that his actions were caused by a "madness" (not the madness he feigns) which he could not control. Third, he says: "Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil / Free me so far in your most generous thoughts . . . ." Now this utterance is clearly an apology for what Hamlet has done; specifically, it is an apology for, at least, his killing Polonius and, maybe his culpability in Ophelia's death. But this apology, coming as it does after the acquiescence lines, conceivably implies a new frame of mind wherein Hamlet will no longer pursue the act that still needs to be done (the revenge against Claudius). What else supports this reading? Hamlet is conceivably sincere here. Laertes clearly is not. Laertes says he is satisfied and will not "wrong Hamlet's love." He is not contradicting himself. He is simply anticipating his revenge: he knows the foil is poisoned. Why does Shakespeare sustain the earlier parallel? Obviously, Hamlet and Laertes are still two different youths, but by now hasn't Hamlet really decided to leave things up to Providence? Hasn't Hamlet finally made a choice? I think so, and I think this choice is the most powerful irony in the play: when Hamlet makes a choice, it doesn't matter. By this time, the situation is out of everyone's hands. Evil is efficacious. It has its own cause and effect. The irony is, therefore, on Hamlet. Thus, when

he finally does kill Claudius, it is only inadvertently an act of revenge. First, he kills him in rage, upon impulse. Second, he kills Claudius not because Claudius killed King Hamlet; on the contrary, he kills Claudius because Claudius inadvertently killed Gertrude. Laertes is also inadvertently killed. (Polonius had been killed and Ophelia went mad and drowned—by accident or design.) The news of the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is announced. Horatio expresses a Romanesque death-wish. At any rate, Hamlet's "revenge" is curious: he revenges his mother more than his father, and he does so in rage.

Now what's the point? The point seems to revolve around sin or evil. First, King Hamlet seems to have sinned. Second, King Claudius does sin. Third, Queen Gertrude lives in "incestuous sheets." Ophelia lies; Laertes deceives. Horatio is the author's (and Hamlet's) mouthpiece. Only Hamlet is really left. What is his sin? Better yet, what is his flaw? Well, he does kill but either in self-defense or rage (or both). I submit Hamlet has no flaw because he is no hero. The play is about sin or evil but not about heroism. Instead, evil itself is the theme. Evil, especially when caused by kings, causes disorder of such kind and degree that everyone suffers. It's the old Adam story. Thus, Hamlet, as the central character, is the sacrifice. Through him order is restored. But there is a new twist. In Oedipus the restored order is a direct result of the sacrifice of Oedipus. In the Christ-story, the same is true. Hamlet has no similar function: he appoints Fortinbras (no matter: Fortinbras, the young opportunist, has "some rights of memory [V,ii,390] in Denmark). In other words, Hamlet, like everyone else in the play, is a loser. He's not a saviour because he's finally too chicken to act; to clean or purify the place. He loses because (A) he can't pull off the revenge (He can't kill Claudius.) or achieve the revenge as he understands it (and as he was asked to do), and (B) he is a victim of the efficacy of evil. Hamlet has no control over the conclusion. It just happens—grows out of the net of evil that pollutes the place. Everyone else of any significance (Fortinbras calls them: "so many princes" [V,ii,394]) loses because they are one-dimensional people (Although Claudius is shrewd, he is still shallow.) in a society where evil prevails and where the "hero" can't save them or himself.

Robert Frost's "The Pasture": Poem and Metapoem

M. Shawn Moore

In his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (Vintage Books, 1980), Douglas R. Hofstadter examines the human mind's ability to deal with the paradoxes he calls "strange loops." Mathematician Kurt Godel postulated that statements of number theory cannot be proved by number theory; M. C. Escher drew two-dimensional pictures of impossibly multi-dimensioned stairways; and J. S. Bach wrote a fugue that imperceptibly changes keys and ends an octave above where it began. Such paradoxes are termed "strange loops" because they are self-referential. Their subject is their own apparent illogic; they not only are, but they are about what they are. Take a strip of paper, twist it once, tape the ends together, and you have a Moebius strip, a one-sided piece of paper. Put your pencil down at any point on the paper and draw a line; you will come back to your starting point having traveled over both sides of the paper.

Language seems to be a particularly appropriate medium for strange loops. Refer the meaning of the sentence "This statement is false" back to itself and suddenly a new, implicit, paradoxical meaning appears. Surely poetry, the artistic arrangement of words, provides innumerable examples of strange loops. A reader knows that a poem will expose him to new experiences and lead him to process those experiences mentally. What he often forgets is that the poem itself is an experience and a process. Robert Frost's seemingly simple poem "The Pasture" is an excellent example of how language can, in the hands of a master, become metalanguage. Commonplace words about commonplace events suddenly take on new meaning and prove to be about what they are. In this case, Frost's use of repetition is the key technique that makes his poem's self-reference work.

The literal experience expressed in the language of "The Pasture" concerns a speaker, apparently a farmer with some routine chores to perform, and a listener, who seems to be a visitor. The farmer needs to leave the visitor for a time in order "to clean the pasture spring" (l. 1). He seems apologetic about leaving his guest as he emphasizes he will "only stop to rake the leaves away" (l. 2). But the parenthetical third line indicates a wishful moment in the speaker; he does not have to "wait to watch the water clear," but he may do so, perhaps because it would give him pleasure. Awareness of his responsibility to his guest, however, causes the farmer to reaffirm that he "shan't be gone long" (l. 4). Then, in the space of

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a missing metrical foot, the speaker perceives a solution to his dilemma: Invite the visitor along. "You come, too," he says (l. 4), and the reader can almost hear the surprise and pleasure in his voice at this new idea.

A similar scene occurs in the second stanza, where the speaker asks the visitor to come with him to fetch a newborn calf. The language used to describe both scenes reflects their simplicity. The diction is plain and unaffected; the speaker uses simple words and sentence structure in keeping with his basic and unadorned lifestyle. The inverted structure of "And wait to watch the water clear, I may" (l. 3) and the use of "shan't" (ll. 4, 8) become in this rural context a taste of rustic dialect. Here in the country are no sophisticated pleasures, and perhaps this fact helps to explain the speaker's initial unease about entertaining his visitor. What he has to offer are simple images: the clearing waters of the spring suggest freshness, purity, and the cold clarity of austere existence; the little calf connotes youth and innocence. In all, the language of the poem presents a literal experience of quiet simplicity which the speaker asks his visitor to share.

Yet the poem seems almost too simple. The only apparent difference between the stanzas is the imagery, for in the eight short lines three phrases each appear twice. But the attentive reader will notice that, in the second stanza, these phrases become tinged with new color. With deliberateness the speaker repeats, "I'm going out" (l. 5). No longer is "I shan't be gone long" an apology, but a promise, filling the missing beat with the hopeful urgency of his final "You come, too" (l. 8). Suddenly the repetition causes the reader to make a mental leap from speaker to poet. Why would Frost repeat himself so deliberately? And in this mental leap the reader finds himself transported from literal experience to the level of the poem's metalanguage. The poem is self-referential; it not only presents an experience, but it is about the act of presenting the experience it presents.

On the level of metalanguage the poet is the farmer, advocating the pure and simple experience of poetry. The reader is the passive visitor, of course, invited to partake, but he is also more, for the "You come, too" actively involves him in the poem's two images. The spring from which the poet will "rake the leaves away" is the reader's own intuitive wellspring, a subconscious flow that can be cleared of the dross of the conscious mind by the experience of poetry. The reader is also the calf, born anew through the opening of his intuition, clean, but wobbling as if the shift to metalanguage has left him somewhat stunned; and the poet gently laughs as he fetches him home.

Then, just as suddenly as it began, the metaexperience ends. "I shan't be gone long" is a key realization, for journeys on strange loops are often short and always return the traveler to where he began. At the end of this poem the reader finds himself back from the pasture, so to speak; yet he returns renewed and changed. The poem's self-reference has led him not only to a poetic experience, but to the realization of what a poetic experience is, and of what poetry offers to the human mind. The poetic process enlarges and expands the reader, only to lead him, ultimately, back

to earth, to life—to himself. Thus, a poem like Robert Frost's "The Pasture" paradoxically discusses poetry at the same time that it is poetry. Try writing this poem on your Moebius strip. The result may prove that poetry is most mystical when it is most prosaic.

Acknowledgment

Ms. Shirlann Finch, mathematician, listened with great patience to an early draft of this essay and conceived the idea of making Frost's poem part of another strange loop by writing it on a Moebius strip.

SUMMER INSTITUTE TO HELP COLLEGE TEACHERS OF LITERATURE KEEP CURRENT IN THEIR FIELD

To help college teachers of literature keep current on developments in their field, the College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English will stage a three-day Summer Institute next year. Informal sessions on the topic "Teaching Literature to Undergraduates" will be held June 1 through 3, 1987, at the Ocean Creek Resort and Conference Center, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Focusing on current literary theory and its applications to teaching, the institute will feature presentations by specialists in the field, small-group discussions, and further opportunities to interact with the leaders and colleagues. The institute is sponsored by the College Section Steering Committee, chaired by Lynn Quitman Troyka of Beechhurst, New York.

Charles Moran of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is program chair. The new institute, he says, stems from the realization that "many English department members have teaching loads and/or research interests that make it difficult or impossible for them to keep up with developments in contemporary critical theory. The institute offers teachers in undergraduate programs a chance to discover what's been happening in the world of critical theory in the last decade or so," he adds. "And a great deal has been happening.

"It's not yet clear to most of us in the profession how we could apply this new body of critical material to our own teaching and reading of literature. Informal discussion during the institute will give participants the opportunity to work out their own ideas."

Each of the three institute days will be devoted to a presentation and discussion of a different current approach to literary criticism. Jane Tompkins of Duke University will conduct the Monday session and discussions on post-structuralist criticism; Steven Mailloux of Syracuse University will present the Tuesday program on reader response criticism; and Houston Baker, University of Pennsylvania, will focus on cultural criticism at the Wednesday session.

Tompkins is the author of *Sensational Design: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* and editor of *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Mailloux is the author of *Interpretive Conventions: The Reader in the Study of American Fiction*, and has written a number of articles on reader response criticism. Baker is author and editor of a number of books, among them *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* and *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism*.

The three leaders will be available throughout the conference schedule to take part in discussions. Additional discussion leaders are Carol Edmonds, Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, Michigan, and James Raymond, University of Alabama, editor of *College English*. The institute schedule allows for free time in the late afternoon and evening for further discussion or recreation. Registration, a buffet, and an opening session are planned for Sunday evening, May 31.

The Ocean Creek Resort, where sessions will be held, is a cluster of lodges and meeting facilities set in groves of oak and pine and on bluffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

Enrollment is limited to 150 persons. The registration fee of $275 includes tuition; workshop materials; a buffet preceding the opening session Sunday night, May 31; coffee service; and three luncheons. Registrants may choose among a variety of accommodations at the Ocean Creek Resort (studio apartments, one-bedroom apartments, and two-bedroom apartments) and may remain for three days before or after the institute at conference rates.

For details and registration forms, write College Institute Information, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and Poetic Integrity

Parks Lanier, Jr.

Because its octave is one carefully developed metaphor and its sestet, two beautifully balanced similes, Keats's Italian sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" is useful for teaching those two literary devices. But more important is the sonnet's usefulness in teaching poetic integrity.

In book after book after book, Keats's sonnet is haunted by a distressing footnote which suggests that Keats made an error when he had Cortez rather than Balboa stare at the Pacific. The *Norton Anthology* condescendingly acknowledges, "That it was Balboa, not Cortez, who caught his first sight of the Pacific from the heights of Darien, in Panama, matters to history but not to poetry."

The implication of such a footnote is, as we learned in fifth grade history, that Balboa "first looked" at the Pacific before Cortez. Therefore, given the subject of Keats's poem, he and not Cortez should be mentioned.

Wrong.

To put Balboa in the place of Cortez, or even to suggest in a footnote that Keats meant to say Balboa, destroys the integrity of the sestet. And of the entire poem.

Keats's sestet turns on two carefully balanced similes. The first, about the astronomer who is the first person ever to see "a new planet," is about the absolute newness of discovery. But in his introductory octave, Keats has said he was not the first person to discover Homer. At best he came to him third hand, through a translation lent him by his friend Cowden Clarke.

It is necessary, therefore, for the integrity of the poem, to conclude with a reference to the relative newness of discovery. The pleasure of discovery is not diminished by coming second or third or hundredth. The fact that Balboa had preceded him in no way diminishes Cortez' feelings of exhilaration when he catches sight of the Pacific. Nor does Cortez, who is going to make it into all those history books, rob "all his men" of their pleasure of "first looking." He will be famous; they will remain anonymous. But their excitement is none the less real.

Keats, who thought his reputation would perish with his early death,

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must have identified not with the astronomer nor with Cortez, but with those nameless men caught up in wonder "silent, upon a peak in Darien."

If Keats had said *Balboa* instead of *Cortez*, both his similes would have said the same thing. His progression from absolute newness of discovery to relative newness of discovery brings the poem to a perfect round of completeness. It ends as it began, a hymn to personal discovery and personal pleasure. To wish the poem said something else is to deny its internal integrity, and John Keats's great skill as a writer.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Focus: *Creative Writing: The Link Between Literature and Composition Study.*

Although all writing involves writers in a creative act, creative writing is categorized by Britton as "poetic" and Kinneavy as "literary," where the emphasis is on literary form. Having students engage in creative writing is not a frill although it is something most students enjoy. It is, however, more than assigning students to write a poem or a short story. Articles for this issue might address: What strategies help students write a poem, a short story, or a play? How is creative writing linked to literature study? What are the skills learned through creative writing that apply to other forms of writing (transactional)? How do we evaluate creative writing? Creative writing—how much? for whom? in what ways? How is creative thinking linked to creative writing? Articles might explore theoretical issues and/or describe practical approaches.

DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 15, 1987

Early American Literature Worth Teaching: Philip Freneau's "Indian" Poems

John Baker

Although literary historians have hailed Philip Freneau as "the father of American poetry" and "the poet of the American Revolution," few of his poems remain standard selections for high school literature classrooms. His "Indian Burying Ground" and "The Wild Honey Suckle," occasionally included in American literature textbooks as noteworthy examples of Eighteenth-Century lyric verse, are likely the only works from the Freneau canon that most secondary students have occasion to read.

In my experience with both elementary and secondary students, I have found few who were not intrigued with the history and culture of the American Indian. Teachers can capitalize on this popularity of Indian subject matter by having students read selections from the numerous—and too frequently ignored—poems about the Indian that Freneau wrote throughout his life. Not only will the poems bring students enjoyable and stimulating literary experiences but, read as a group, will provide teachers with an excellent opportunity to help their classes become aware of how a poet often treats a subject in very diverse ways. Critics frequently describe Freneau as a writer who celebrated the Indian as a noble savage; however, when students begin reading his poems, they will see that this is definitely not always the case.

Freneau's portrayal of the Indian and his descriptions of the concerns and conflicts of the American colonists also offer many possibilities for interdisciplinary studies, but this paper deals with the poems themselves as worthwhile selections for the literature classroom. As students read the poetry, they will find various images of the Indian, each of which serves as a different vehicle for Frenau to express his lifelong theme that freedom should be our most sought after and valued possession.

During the eighty years of his life, Freneau wrote a group of poems in which the Indian is a symbol of man living an ideal life of complete freedom. In "Sketches of American History" (1784), for example, he describes the Indians who lived in America centuries before the arrival of the Europeans as "dwell[ing] in their wigwams . . ./In a mere state of nature, untutored, untaught,/They did as they pleased, and they spoke

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as they thought."[1] Freneau presents this view of primitive existence in a much later poem, "On the Civilization of the Western Aboriginal Country" (1822), as an illustration of the ideal life which man should try to achieve:

> Go teach what reason dictates should be taught,
> And learn from *Indians* one great Truth you ought,
> That, through the world, wherever man exists,
> Involved in darkness, or obscured in mists,
> Take all, through all, through nation, tribe, or clan
> The child of Nature is the *better* man.

In such an existence the Indian is a "better man" because he has freedom. "The Child of Nature" has not been subjected to the evils of civilization, and he lives in a land that, as Freneau wrote in one of his "Tomo Cheeki" essays, is "free as the waters" and where "the odious land-mark was never seen to arrest the foot of the hunter."[2] The only real threat to the Indian's freedom is the inevitable approach of his own death. The subject of Freneau's "The Dying Indian" (1784), for instance, laments that he must leave his native land and the freedom of his "active days."

Another group of poems, again representing the span of Freneau's career, focuses on the Indian's reaction when his freedom is threatened or completely destroyed. The tone of these poems varies considerably from a mild lament for the Indian's plight to a more poignant analysis of his grief and despair. A section of "On the Immigration to America" (1785) deals with the beginnings of the westward movement and includes the following description of the Indian's attempt to escape the invasion of the white man:

> From these fair plains, these rural seats,
> So long concealed, so lately known,
> The unsocial Indian far retreats,
> To make some other clime his own,
> Where other streams, less pleasing flow,
> And darker forests round him grow.

No longer free to live where he chooses, the Indian must move from a "fair" to a "darker" land. That the Indian is "unsocial" is not meant to be a criticism. He is merely striving to hold on to the life which he has always known, and Freneau seems to admire such an effort.

A second poem dealing with this theme of loss of freedom is "The Prophecy of King Tammany" (1782). At the beginning of the poem Freneau describes the old Indian chief sadly viewing the arrival of "Europe's sons" and asking " 'What have we done, great patrons, say, / 'That strangers seize our woods away, / 'And drive us naked from our native plain?' " Students who read this poem should note that because of the strong feelings Freneau had about freedom, it is possible, especially during the American Revolution, that he identified closely with the plight of the Indian. In the prophecy, which the chief delivers, Freneau places the Indian and the American patriot on common ground:

> 'But mark me, Christian, ere I go
> 'Thou, too shall have thy share of woe;
> 'When hostile squadrons for your blood shall come,

'And ravage all your shore!
'Your warriors and your children slay,
'And some in dismal dungeons lay,
'Or lead them captive far away,
'To climes unknown, through seas untried before.'

Freneau wrote two other poems which, like "The Prophecy of King Tammany," focus on individual Indians who express feelings about their loss of freedom. "The Indian Student" (1787) and "The Indian Convert" (1797) are character studies of Indians who have come face to face with the white man's culture. Both Indians, through the efforts of clergymen, have been taken from their people to the "white-man's land"[3] to be educated and, in the case of the Convert, to receive "grace and religion." Freneau appropriately subtitles "The Indian Student" the "Force of Nature." The Indian youth finds no happiness or rewards in studying languages and science, and whenever possible he escapes into the forest where his "heart is fixed." Finally he completely rebels against his new life and leaves the college to return to his "native shades." As in "The Prophecy of King Tammany," Freneau appears to identify with the youth and respect his desire to return to a life where "musty books," "wealth," and the white man's religion have no place. The clergyman and the learned men of the college appear self-centered and unfeeling, their main concern being that "An Indian savage so well bred / Great credit promised to the schools."

In "The Indian Convert" students will find a definite change in Freneau's portrayal of the Indian. In the same situation as the Indian Student, the Convert rebels against the teachings of the parson who has persuaded him to leave his tribe. He would rather fish and hunt than listen to sermons; and, when the parson tells him that heaven is like a meeting with "good people, all singing, with preaching and prayer," the Indian will have nothing more to do with the white man's life and religion. The similarity, however, between the Student and the Convert is related only to their encounter with civilization and their rebellion against it. Unlike the Student, the Convert's main concern is whether or not there will be food and liquor—"things for the stomach"—in heaven. When the parson tells him that there is no eating or drinking there, the Convert retorts: "I cannot consent to be lodged in a place / Where there's nothing to eat and but little to steal." Compared to the Student, the Convert is no noble savage whose loss of freedom immediately arouses sympathy; but Freneau does depict him as a victim of the white man's world. He has been "teased" into joining the parson's "flock" and now has to endure the parson's "constant harassing." In this poem Freneau presents a very different picture of the Indian. While he allows his Student to maintain dignity, the portrait of the Convert is pathetic and ironic.

In the poems examined thus far, the Indian is either an admirable figure living in a natural state of freedom or a victim of the negative influences of civilization. In reading Freneau's poetry, students will discover an additional and quite contrasting image of the Indian.

That America would achieve her own freedom and independence was Freneau's dream, and anything standing in the way of that dream he was ready to attack. Freneau was of course aware of the difficulties the early colonists had experienced with the Indians. While he praises the life of the savages in many poems, he does not ignore the Indian as a detrimental factor in America's history. When, for example, he is describing the early colonization of America in "The Rising Glory of America" (1771), he states that the white man had to battle "fierce Indian tribes" who "With vengeful malice arm'd, and black design, / Oft murdered, or dispersed, these colonies." His most severe image of the Indian as enemy appears in the following lines from "American Liberty, A Poem" (1775):

> Oft when the husband did his labour leave
> To meet his little family at eve,
> Stretch'd in their blood he saw each well known face,
> His dear companion and his youthful race;
> Perhaps the scalp with barbarous fury torn,
> The visage mangled, and the babe unborn
> Ripp'd from its dark abode, to view the sun,
> Ere nature finish'd half she had begun.

After describing the gruesome killing of the family, Freneau adds:

> And should we now when spied thro' ev'ry shore,
> Submit to that our fathers shunn'd before?
> Should we, just heaven, our blood and labour spent,
> Be slaves and minions to a parliament?

Students need to note that this poem was written in 1775 when Freneau—the poet of the American Revolution—was calling America to fight for independence. In the above lines of the poem he is playing on the reader's feeling of obligation to the efforts and sacrifices made by the early colonists. Freneau is obviously using the Indian—this time as the brutal savage, the constant threat to the colonists—as a means of arousing his readers' emotions.

Three years later in "American Independence and Her Everlasting Deliverance from British Tyranny and Oppression" Freneau accuses King George of hoping "That the fierce Indian, rousing from his rest / Might these new regions with his flames invest, / With scalps and tortures aggravate our woe." Again, the Indian becomes Freneau's device for arousing hatred and rebellion against the British. At the beginning of this poem Freneau states that when God created man, He "formed him to free." But in this poem and at this particular time in Freneau's life the Indian was not an appropriate and persuasive illustration of the ideal state of freedom; instead Freneau presents him as both a past and present obstacle to the freedom of Americans.

When students read selections from these different categories of Freneau's poems, they should experience rich personal responses because of their knowledge of early American history, the Indian, and their own feelings about freedom. In addition, reading examples from the poetry will help

them see the importance of responding to a work of literature, not on the basis of inaccurate generalizations about the writer and his or her work but on the selection's own unique qualities.

Notes

[1]Fred L. Pattee, *The Poems of Philip Freneau*. Princeton: The University Library, 1902-07. Unless otherwise noted, the text of all Freneau's poems cited in this article is Pattee's three-volume work.

[2]Philip M. Marsh, *The Works of Philip Freneau: A Critical Study*. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1968, p. 105.

[3]Philip Freneau, "The Indian Student," in Milton R. Stern and Seymour L. Gross, ed. *American Literature Survey*. New York: The Viking Press, 1968, p. 597.

A New Edition of *A Celebration of Teachers*

A new, expanded edition of *A Celebration of Teachers*, a Diamond Jubilee paperback from the National Council of Teachers of English honoring teachers for their roles in enhancing the lives and opportunities of well-known Americans, was released as the 76th Annual Convention of NCTE opened at the San Antonio Convention Center.

The first edition of *A Celebration of Teachers* was published last year to mark NCTE's 75th Anniversary as a professional organization devoted to improving the teaching of English at all levels of education, from elementary through college. In this new, second edition, famous Americans tell how a special teacher, usually a teacher of English, encouraged them, pushed them to do their best in and out of school, and thus helped to shape their careers.

In the preface of the new edition, NCTE President Richard Lloyd-Jones, University of Iowa, says, "This collection is a series of thank-you notes. Some famous former students who are entranced with words thank some of their teachers, who cared a lot about language. The teachers also seemed to care a lot about young people, enough to work around their foolishness and hold them to high standards of performance." Even though students don't often remember to thank a teacher in person, Lloyd-Jones says, "from these tributes to particular teachers, all teachers of English can take heart."

Anguish and Anger

Susan Robbins

Anguish and anger are the fires that burn away innocence in James Joyce's "Araby" and James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues." (All references are to the texts of the stories in R.V. Cassil, ed., *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, Third Edition, 1986.) These are the same fires that smolder in our students; consequently, the emotional experiences of the young Dubliner and Sonny are familiar even though the settings are exotic—the grainy textured newsreel of Dublin, 1914, and the streets full of menace, gospel and drugs of Harlem, 1957. Our classrooms are "fire proofed" so that these emotional fires can rage splendidly, drawing air and fuel from young readers.

Both stories are narrated by men who look back on a crisis in a relationship, but they reach very different conclusions. Contrasting the kinds of understanding achieved by these tellers of the stories provides, to continue the metaphor for a moment, a fire line or general structure for the discussions and analyses. The two kinds of understanding of the self in "Araby" and of a brother in "Sonny's Blues" come at great cost to the narrators. Counting these costs in lists on the board or in journal/notebooks brings students closer to the texts and also to their own difficult experiences with family members or infatuation.

At the start of a discussion of these stories, it is helpful to tell students what they already know, namely, that reading is a "function of personal identity" (Norman N. Holland, "The Millers Wife and the Professors: Questions about the Transactive Theory of Reading," *New Literary History*, Spring 1986, p. 424). The lists of details from the stories protect the students from the heat of their own lives and lead them from any tendency toward over emphasis on reading only as a function of personal identity. Such lists also juxtapose told and lived experiences and make writing the obligatory final essays easier. Class discussion is, with the strategy of the list, a pre-writing exercise.

The nameless narrators in the stories cut themselves off from knowing the person they most want to know. Their solipism or vanity blinds them. As they ask themselves, How is the distance between the narrators and their loved ones conveyed by Baldwin and Joyce? students learn how to look at the facts of plotting and draw conclusions about spiritual or psychological conditions in the narrators.

Baldwin, they see, delays letting Sonny, the focus of the story, into the story—a time honored device that raises interest. *Hamlet* and *Hedda Gabler*

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are good digressions to embark on here. Students love to get the teacher off the track, see the dreamy look come, and put down their pencils. Baldwin's delay in bringing Sonny into the story is definitely a device to point to the flawed character of the narrator, Sonny's brother. The discussion of this algebra teacher narrator who knows that teachers often want their students "out of their sight and off their minds" allows students to vent their anger against bad teachers. They come to appreciate the fact that this teacher narrator understands his rigidity, his I-know-better-what's-good-for-you view of the world and his brother. As he changes from the man who reads about his brother's addiction and arrest in the newspaper to the man who goes to the bar to hear his brother playing the blues, the students trace his change in their notes and discussion and become more tolerant of teacherly types and authority figures. By the end of the story, the algebra teacher has come to recognize his brother's genius, to listen to him on his terms, to understand his language of blues, and to see in the glass of milk and scotch on the nightclub piano, the "cup of trembling." This cup of anger and anguish ("of trembling" like the one from Isaiah, Baldwin's source for the beautiful phrase) is removed . . . for the moment. The students appreciate the narrator's realism, his algebraic good sense when he says that the relief from anguish and anger lasts "only a moment, that the world waited outside, as hungry as a tiger, and trouble stretched above us, longer than the sky."

Joyce's narrator looks further back into childhood than Baldwin's, to the "career of play," the "rough tribes" of friends playing in the dusk in the dark dripping gardens and muddy lanes of his youth. At first, this narrator seems to be flawed simply by youth and innocence. But his journey to Araby is undertaken freely and foolishly, not innocently. He knows, as all children know, that gifts cost money. He knows his uncle drinks and is careful with money. He knows that he promised to bring back "something" for Mangan's sister. Again, listing the details of his actions, the ways he sees her, reveals the not entirely innocent distance between the boy and his beloved, the beginnings of anguish and anger. "Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen." She is not a whole person to him. He sees her in parts—her rope of hair, her hand, her neck, the white border of a petticoat. They speak to each other once, but her name alone summons his foolish blood. Her image accompanies him in "places most hostile to romance." She is a brown figure in the shadows who turns a silver bracelet on her wrist. He likes for his senses to "veil themselves," to feel that he is about to slip away. His feelings may remind students that we live in a time of recreational drugs but that there are other ways to lose ourselves in romance.

The final epiphany at the bazaar is difficult to discuss for all its familiarity—the disillusionment and loss of first love. The difficulty for students lies in Joyce's subtleties. Instead of a blinding insight into his own foolishness, there are for the narrator only flickerings of light to reveal

his nature to him—"a creature driven and derided by vanity." Listing the details visible to the boy at ten minutes to ten—the colored lamps, the leftover tea sets, the hall in half darkness, the accomplished and worldly flirtation going on in foreign accents, his eight cents left in his pocket—shows the kindling of the inner fires that will burn his eyes with "anguish and anger."

"Araby" and "Sonny's Blues" are much anthologized and are worth teaching to our students, who can see themselves in the young Dubliner or Sonny, and who can see us, their teachers, in the algebra instructor. In both stories, they can recognize and appreciate how Joyce and Baldwin construct narratives that lead through anger and anguish to understanding or freedom. When Sonny played his blues, "freedom lurked around," and, when the boy gazed up into the darkened hall, he at last sees clearly who he is.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

SPRING 1987

Focus: *Teaching about the English Language*

Whether we call ourselves "English teachers" or "language arts teacher," the basis of what we do is the English language. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening take place through language; and, of course, language is theoretically co-equal with literature and composition if one looks at the English curriculum that way. But both in programs to prepare teachers and in the curriculum, language has often been given little attention. The theme of this issue is, therefore, the language component of the English curriculum: What should we teach about it? To whom? At what grade? In what way? The editors look for both theoretical and practical articles, those that review appropriate aspects of linguistics and those that describe teaching units and strategies.

DEADLINE FEBRUARY 1, 1987

Willa Cather—
Not Just a Prairie Writer

Evelyn Beamer

One of the first widely read women writers of fiction in American literature was Willa Cather. A native of Virginia, Cather moved to Nebraska as a child and developed a love for the land and the immigrants who settled there. Once considered a mere regionalist, Cather has recently become recognized for her recurring themes and strong imagery. She does much more than portray life in the Midwest at the turn of the century; she addresses many of the concerns of today's young people—the importance of the land, art vs. materialism, untimely death, and family life.

Because of her prairie stories, Cather is usually associated with the land, and the significance of the land is the theme in many of her stories. Not only is it apparent in her descriptions but also in her characters' awareness of their place in relation to the land. To young Jim Burden, an orphan from Virginia in *My Antonia*, the prairies are empty and lonely at first just as he is after losing his mother and father. On first viewing his new surroundings, he forlornly observes that "there was nothing but land; not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made" (p. 8). The vastness of the new land only adds to his loneliness. He explains, "Between that earth and that sky, I felt erased, blotted out" (p. 9).

However, the land soon becomes a place of adventure and exploration for young Jim just as it is for the Sandtown boys in "The Enchanted Bluff." Their adventurous nature draws them to an area where no man has stood—a fresh world to call their own. Just as the boys are constantly growing and changing, "the channel was never the same for two successive seasons" (p. 4). Standing where new sandbars have formed, they feel something akin to what their ancestors had felt as they had pushed westward to new lands. "There was nothing willful or unmanageable in the landscape" (p. 5) of the cornfields or pastures, but along the river they can find their own fresh new world.

Although the Sandtown boys desired a fresh world, the young man in "Tom Outland's Story" yearns for a free world. As a hired hand on a ranch, he experiences the freedom found only "on the mesa, in a world above the world" (p. 61). While on an extended visit to Washington, Tom desires anew the freedom of the "world above the world." He wants "nothing but to get back to the mesa and live a free life and breathe free air, and

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never, never again to see hundreds of little black-coated men pouring out of white buildings" (p. 58).

However, it is the main character in "Neighbor Rosicky" who best represents the usual Cather view of the land. Rosicky finds his roots in the land; he is the "one tap-root that goes down deep" (p. 89). In a sense his "rooted" world encompasses both the fresh world of the Sandtown boys and the free world of Tom Outland. His world is ever fresh—changing with the seasons and the weather. His land gives him freedom because "to be a landless man was to be a wage-earner, a slave, all your life; to have nothing, to be nothing" (p. 93). Finding security in the land himself, Rosicky sees it as the hope for his sons. He remembers his experiences in the city, "cemented away from any contact with the ground" (p. 88). For that reason he wants his sons on the land because "if he could think of them as staying on the land, he wouldn't have to fear any great unkindness for them" (p. 103).

For the young and the old, love for the land is a binding factor in most of Willa Cather's stories. Wherever man wanders, if he is to be fresh, free, and secure, he must return to the land. Cather suggests man's need for the land best with her plant imagery in "The Best Years." Like returning home, returning to the land is to be where one "ought to be. A plant that has been washed out by a rain storm feels like that when a kind gardener puts it gently back into its own earth with its own group" (p. 124).

Juxtaposed with her love of the land is Cather's love of the arts, which she intertwines into many of her stories. Often the arts are a form of temporary escape from the hardships of life. Rosicky recalls standing through an opera while in New York because "it gave a fellow something to think about for the rest of the week" (p. 86). In *My Antonia* Jim Burden and Lena Lingard, one of the Bohemian girls, often attend the theater together. Jim likes to go with Lena because "everything was wonderful to her and everything was true. It was like going to revival meetings with someone who is always being converted" (p. 176). However, he can never escape from his "own naked land and the figures scattered upon it" for long because "in some strange way they accompanied [him] through all [his] experiences" (p. 170).

As exemplified in "Paul's Case," not all of her characters are able to bridge the gap between the escape found in the world of art and the "real world." For Paul "it was at the theatre and Carnegie Hall that [he] really lived; the rest was but a sleep and a forgetting" (p. 161). As an usher at Carnegie Hall, he is surrounded by the world he loves. "The first sigh of the instruments seemed to free some hilarious spirit within him" (p. 154), and he becomes lost in the art in the gallery. Backstage with his friend Charley Edwards, he is "like a prisoner set free, and feels within him the possibility of doing or saying splendid, brilliant things" (p. 161). Although Paul does not wish to become an actor or a musician, he wants "to be in the atmosphere, float on the wave of it, to be carried out, blue

league after blue league away from everything" (p. 162).

Just as Paul cannot be a part of the world of glitter, neither can he fit into the monotony of everyday life. Not only does his father, who dreams of his son becoming a clerk to a magnate of one of the steel corporations, fail to understand him; but also his teachers describe him as impertinent, disorderly, and defiant. The drawing teacher admits that there is "something about the boy which none of them understood" (p. 151). As circumstances continue to deteriorate, Paul is taken out of school and begins working for a firm called Denny and Carson's. All of the people he has been associated with at the theater and concert hall are instructed not to see the boy. He is forced into the ugliness and commonness of daily life on Cordelia Street. Since he is unable to fit into either world, most people agree "that Paul's was a bad case" (p. 163).

For Tom Outland, art is to be appreciated and preserved. Because of this, he learns about the greed and indifference of the materialistic world. While keeping cattle at a winter camp on the Cruzados River in New Mexico, he discovers an ancient cliff city. Tom describes the village as being "more like sculpture than anything else" (p. 33). Realizing the importance of the discovery, Tom takes some pottery samples and goes to Washington seeking government assistance to help "revive [the] civilization in a scholarly work" (p. 47). Tom spends most of his time in Washington waiting to see influential authorities who show no interest in his discovery. He learns the truth of his friend Virginia Ward's words: "They don't care much about dead and gone Indians. What they do care about is going to Paris and getting another ribbon on their coats" (p. 57).

Disillusioned, Tom finally leaves Washington. But before he reaches the mesa, he learns that his partner has sold the Indian relics to a German who has already removed them from the country via Mexico. Too late he realizes that he and Blake did not place the same value on the relics. Blake explains that, although he realized that Tom "cared about the things, and was proud of them," he had assumed that Tom planned to sell them just as Blake had and "that it would come to money in the end. 'Everything does,' he added" (p. 64).

Cather best depicts the world of art vs. the materialistic world in "The Sculptor's Funeral." Steavens, a young Bostonian, accompanies the body of Harvey Merrick, the sculptor, to his home town of Sand City, Kansas. As he views the squalid conditions there, Steavens understands for the first time "the quiet bitterness of the smile that he had seen so often on his master's lips" (p. 533). As Jim Laird, the lawyer, relates incidents from Merrick's childhood, Steavens finds it difficult to believe that "all this raw, biting ugliness had been the portion of the man whose mind was to become an exhaustless gallery of beautiful impressions" (p. 534). Only in the lawyer is Steavens able to find someone who seemed to understand the sculptor. As he studies the bearded man with "florid face and blood-shot eyes," he wonders "what link there had been between the porcelain vessel and so sooty a lump of potter's clay" (p. 533).

At the wake when he learns how the townspeople viewed Merrick, Steavens realizes even more the greatness of the sculptor. To them, "Harve never was much account for anything practical, and he shore was never fond of work" (p. 536). One by one they elaborate on his abundance of dreaminess and lack of practicality. Steavens is amazed that they do not realize that the only notoriety the town had was Harvey Merrick. Finally, coming to Merrick's rescue, Jim Larid elaborates on all the cheating and lying the men of the town have done. He marvels that "a genius should ever have been called from this place of hatred and bitter waters . . . [and] sick, side-tracked, burnt-dog, land-poor sharks" (p. 538). It is then that Steavens realizes what a truly great man the sculptor had been and the truth of Merrick's father's words at the beginning of the story when he said, "He was ez gentle ez a child and the kindest of'em all—only we didn't none of us ever onderstand him" (p. 533).

Death is a natural and accepted factor in many of Cather's stories. Cemeteries are a common part of the Nebraska countryside. In "The Best Years" Cather describes a cemetery adjoining a schoolyard and says, "The cemetery never depressed the children and surely the school cast no gloom over the cemetery" (p. 115). Rosicky, in "Neighbor Rosicky," finds the graveyard that lay at the edge of his hayland "snug and homelike, not cramped or mournful," and finds comfort in the fact that "he would never have to go farther than the edge of his own hayfield" (p. 81).

Cather also deals with the untimely deaths of youth and of suicide. Arthur Adams, the reflective, intelligent young man in "The Enchanted Bluff" whom the other boys looked to for leadership, dies before he is twenty-five. The narrator wonders why "when Nature had taken such pains with a man, . . . she had ever lost him in Sandtown" (p. 14). In "The Best Years" Miss Knightly learns of the premature death of Lesley Ferguesson, whom she had helped get a teaching position when she was only fourteen. Twenty-five years later she visits Lesley's mother, who remembers the incident "as if it had happened yesterday" (p. 146). After all that time, her mother feels that "there's nothing in all [her] life so precious to [her] to remember and think about as [her] Lesley" (p. 146).

Some of Cather's characters, unable to face the harsh realities of life, commit suicide. In *My Antonia*, Mr. Shimerda cannot adjust to life in America. Antonia points out, "My papa, he cry for leave his old friends what make music with him . . . He don't like this kawn-tree" (p. 61). Finally, shortly after Christmas, he dresses in his best clothes, kisses his daughters, tells them he is going to hunt rabbits, and goes to the barn and shoots himself. Similarly, when the young man in "Paul's Case" can no longer face his dreadfully boring existence with his father, he embezzles money and runs to New York, where for almost two weeks he lives the life he had dreamed of living. He then goes out and throws himself in front of a train. In both cases, Cather shows sensitive, artistic people who, unable to adjust to a common life, calmly and meticulously plan their suicides and then destroy themselves.

Family life is a dominant factor in most of Cather's works. Many families, like Rosicky's, are warm and loving with a father-figure dominating. However, so many of the families she wrote about are dominated by the mother. Antonia's family is dominated by her mother whose idea it was to come to America. In contrast, her father is a weak character who remains mostly in the shadows of the dugout. Later, Antonia is the dominant figure in her own family. The violent description of the mother in "The Sculptor's Funeral" when contrasted with the feebleness of the father leaves no doubt about who dominated that family. Lesley Ferguesson's father in "The Best Years" is described as a dreamer, whereas the mother is "authority and organization" (p. 126). In "Paul's Case" a widowed father is unsuccessful in rearing his sensitive son. Over and over, Cather shows the mother dominating and being the strong force which holds the family together.

Young people can identify with many of the experiences of the characters created by Willa Cather. Similar to Tom and Rosicky, they too feel the pull of the land and are concerned about its preservation. Cather is able to express verbally for them the needs which the land fulfills in a person—the freshness, the freedom, the rootedness. Like Harvey Merrick, their art forms are not always appreciated by the adults—their music is too loud; their poems do not rhyme. In Paul, they can see the danger of losing touch with reality. They, like Cather's characters, question the death of a young friend or the suicide of a loved one. Cather writes of families like many of theirs—families that are close and well-adjusted even though there may not be a father-figure or he may be away much of the time. Although Cather was writing in the early part of this century, her message is for today's youth.

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Bellow's *Dangling Man:* Archetype of Adolescence

James E. Davis

Book titles are often ill-chosen and misleading; *Dangling Man*, Saul Bellow's first novel, published in 1944, is, however, an exception. The protagonist is given only a first name, Joseph, and he does dangle in many ways: between action and inaction, between acceptance of tradition and denial of tradition, between participation and isolation, between love and hate, and probably most significant, between his old self and his emerging new self. How like adolescents he is! Adolescence is not so much an age as a state of mind.

Not only is the word "dangling" in the title especially revealing, but also the absence of an article, either definite or indefinite, tends to establish Joseph as a typical representative of a whole generation of waiting young men in the World War II era. He is also representative of all adolescents.

The book is written in the form of a journal with the first entry December 15, 1942, and the last entry April 9, 1943. As the journal opens, it has already been nearly seven months since Joseph has resigned his job at the Inter-American Travel Bureau to answer his call for induction. He is a twenty-seven-year-old Canadian, a British subject, and cannot be drafted without an investigation. During the past seven months he has been investigated, classified as 1-A upon examination, transferred to 3-A, summoned for a new blood test, and subsequently reclassified 1-A. All of this he calls, "a trivial seeming thing, a sort of bureaucratic comedy trimmed out in red tape" (Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man*, New York: The New American Library, 1965, p. 8).

Nonetheless his reaction has been something more than trivial. In addition to quitting his job, he and his wife have moved to a rooming house. Joseph, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin with a major in history and a particular interest in the Enlightenment, can no longer concentrate on reading. He eventually rejects all his friends and relatives, including his wife, and loses self-control. He attacks one landlord physically early in the book, which forces him to find new lodging; and, toward the end of the book, he attacks, verbally, a neighboring roomer. As a result of this, he rushes out of the house and goes to the draft board to be drafted at 10:30 p.m. Of course, the office is closed; so Joseph writes a letter requesting

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to be taken at the earliest possible moment into the Armed Forces and adding across the bottom of the letter, "I am available at any time" (p. 122).

In effect Joseph is dangling no more. He wants no more delays, and his decision has a salutary effect—he can even read now. After his final blood test, he reads all day. Things are no longer in his hands. He says in his last entry: "I am no longer to be held accountable for myself; I am grateful for that. I am in other hands, relieved of self-determination, freedom canceled. Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirit! Long live regimentation!" (p. 126).

Thus Joseph, who has begun his journal in a rejection of regimentation, ends glorifying it. He had said in his very first entry in the journal that to keep a journal was a kind of weakness in this "era of hardboileddom" (p. 7). He had also written that this was an era of strangling emotions. In the end he has strangled his emotions and will no doubt cease keeping a journal.

Any effort to understand the theme of this work must involve understanding Joseph and his attempt to find something of real value. But in making a conscious attempt, he is not able to find it. The books which had stood for "guarantors of an extended life" (p. 8) he can no longer even read. He has thought of going back to work, but he will not admit that he does not know how to use his freedom. Such an admission would mean lack of character.

At one time he makes a feeble attempt to join the Navy, but induction is the only way for aliens. He writes:

> There is nothing to do but wait, or dangle, and grow more and more dispirited. It's perfectly clear to me that I am deteriorating, storing bitterness and spite which eat like acids at my endowment of generosity and good will. But the seven months delay is only one source of my harassment. Again, I sometimes think of it as the backdrop against which I can be seen swinging. It is still more. Before I can properly estimate the damage it has done me, I shall have to be cut down. (p. 9)

Even though he knows the damage that is being done, he chooses to let it continue. He asserts an existential freedom of choice.

Joseph's world, even the world of physical movement, steadily narrows. Even the effort of going to the store puts him in a disagreeable state. He does not go more than three blocks because he is afraid of meeting an acquaintance who might express surprise at seeing him and ask questions. He has not, however, completely rejected the world of action, for he reads the daily newspaper completely as a kind of ritual. This part of his tie with tradition he does not cut. He says he reads the comics because he has done so since childhood.

Here is the pattern of his existence: "Re-entering waking life after the regeneration (when it is that) of sleep, I go in the body from nakedness to clothing and in the mind from relative purity to pollution. Raising the window, I test the weather; opening the paper, I admit the world" (p. 11). He obviously feels that he is purified by sleep (isolation) and corrupted

in waking by even his limited participation—raising the window, testing the weather, and opening the paper.

One of the sources of most disturbance to Joseph is his next-door-neighbor in the rooming house, Mr. Vanaker, who is an alcoholic, a snoop, a thief, and generally a dirty old man. Possibly he disturbs Joseph most because he is an image of what Joseph, continuing in his present direction, might become. Joseph is also disturbed by his mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother, sister-in-law, and niece.

It is not just human beings who bother Joseph. Billboards, warehouses, culverts, parked cars, moving cars, trees, streets, and tracks also are to him symbols of an interior life that is materially oriented and thus hollow. He says, however, that the "old" Joseph tried to find signs of a common humanity in things but now the "new" Joseph is existential in that "He is a person greatly concerned with keeping intact and free from encumbrance a sense of his own being, its importance . . . he keeps a tight hold because . . . he is keenly intent on knowing what is happening to him. He wants to miss nothing" (p. 19). The "old" Joseph was a member of the Communist party at seventeen, but the "new" Joseph has rejected all such practical programs. Even though he has rejected the party, he is offended that a member of the party has rejected him in one scene.

The "old" Joseph thought at one time that he had found a group of people who thought as he did, but at one of their parties he found that even this group had no power to "free the charge of feeling on the pent heart" (p. 31), as the mysterious religious rites of the Greeks had done.

Amos, Joseph's older brother, is a wealthy man. His wife and daughter represent wealth and middle class values. Joseph rejects them and all their offers of assistance. One of the most startling scenes of the book concerns Joseph's whipping of his sixteen-year-old-niece, Etta, for whom he had previously had an affinity because of her resemblance to him. The cause of the fight is a disagreement over a record player, a fight which she provoked but which Joseph made no attempt to ameliorate. Later, Joseph has a rather shabby love affair, somewhat by default, but even this is given up when it seems to present any kind of strain or awkwardness.

In a dream sequence near the end of the book, Joseph fears death, which comes to him in various forms, but he ends with an acceptance of death and the affirmation—"But I must know what I myself am" (p. 80). Shortly after, the framework of exploring self is set into motion with the dialogues between Joseph and his alter-ego the Spirit of Alternatives. They discuss alienation and idealism with the Spirit of Alternatives seeming to say that some reasonable participation is advisable. Joseph's reaction: "Oh, get out. Get out of here. You're two-faced. You're not to be trusted you damned diplomat, you cheat! Furious I flung a handful of orange peel at him, and he fled the room" (p. 94).

Finally, Joseph completely emerges as the existential hero when he says:

> The sense in which Goethe was right. Continued life means expectation. Death is the abolition of choice. The more choice is limited, the closer we are to death.

> The greatest cruelty is to curtail expectations without taking away life completely. A life term in prison is like that. So is citizenship in some countries. The best solution would be to live as if the ordinary expectations had not been removed, not from day to day, blindly. But that requires immense self-mastery. (p. 98)

Joseph admits that he does not have this self-mastery, that his attempt at freedom has been a failure since he does not know what to do with it (p. 100). He decides striving is for something, and that something is freedom (p. 102).

In another talk with the Spirit of Alternatives, he confesses that he is "harried, pushed, badgered, worried, nagged, heckled" (p. 109). The Spirit asks what it is that does all these things to him. He answers: "Well, it's a kind of conscience. I don't respect it as I do my own. It's the public part of me. It goes deep. It's the world internalized, in short" (p. 109).

He decides that the war can destroy him physically but that, as long as he is alive, he must follow his destiny anyway. He does. It leads to the Army and regimentation with a loss of freedom and individuality. The irony of his attempt and the outcome is obvious.

In many ways this is a novel of rebirth by choice, but it is not an optimistic rebirth. It is an ironic one. At the end, Joseph is in many ways right back where he started. It is not really so much a "new" Joseph born as it is the "old" Joseph resurrected by submerging self. The novel also tries to show the results of attempting to be completely honest with self and others. Attempting only, since Joseph constantly rationalizes his actions and inactions. The attempt, of course, leads nearer and nearer to total isolation. When Joseph cannot cope with this isolation any longer, he rejoins the Human Race, which he is not so sure is "human." He surrenders.

The novel does not have a real sense of place. It is Chicago, but it might as well be any large city. Perhaps this vagueness of setting is part of the author's attempt to universalize Joseph as the non-combatant during war; however, since Joseph's immediate plight is a result of specific time and place, possibly his generalization could be more realized with additional attention to scene. Probably this is really a comment on the rather contrived nature of the situation.

Bellow has attempted to follow carefully the development of the conscious experience—his main reason for choosing the journal form in which the narrator is able to reflect even on his thoughts. Certainly a sense of immediacy is gained, but one is always aware of Bellow's manipulation of situations and ideas—always ideas. Lack of action is certainly a major weakness in this book, resulting from the author's failure to remove himself from the scene. The few scenes of real action such as the ones at the brother's house, the Servatius party, and the restaurant, and the verbal attack in the bathroom on Vanaker are well handled and show that Bellow knows how to manage action when he chooses.

Stylistically for a novel of this type, the dialogue experimentation with the Spirit of Alternatives is a happy choice in that it enables the author to emphasize in a new and impressive way the real struggle that is taking

place, but it does slow down considerably what little action there is. One of Bellow's best characteristics as a writer is his ability to handle dialogue.

Joseph is the only character who is fully realized. This focus on one character is in some ways appropriate, but a clearer drawing of other characters—the wife, for instance—might serve to throw more light on Joseph. Again, this single focus is largely a result of the journal technique.

Certainly Bellow's first novel is interesting in that it leads to *The Victim*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Herzog*; but it is also worth reading, especially by adolescents, in its own right for its subject matter, theme, and stylistic experimentation, if not for story. Bellow is probably too possessed with his ideas here, and thus they take over the novel. But this characteristic is not unusual in novels, especially first novels, and it is probably exactly what he intended. He succeeds in universalizing his character and situation, even if he fails in some ways to particularize.

Huck Finn and America's Symbolic Landscape

Dan Walker

The decision whether to organize the study of American literature chronologically, thematically, or typologically is subject to many considerations. When the decision is made, however, to treat a work (or a theme, or a genre, or an author) as *American*, I am convinced the study will benefit from a consideration of the *imagined* America of myth and tradition. The assertions I will make are not beyond challenge. In class, they would be *intended* to be questioned, as part of a process laying the background—a symbolic map, as it were—under our study of the country's literature and intellectual history. While I will not make specific teaching suggestions, I will try to show how a study of a particular work, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, can take its bearings from such a "map."

America's poles are not North and South, but East and West. The following sets of opposites have been polarized into two groups, according to their "mythic" associations:

WEST	EAST
new	old
youth	age
future	past
danger/risk	safety
motion	stasis
freedom	bondage
energy	lethargy
progress	stagnation
virtue	corruption
exhibition	inhibition
openness	secrecy
simplicity	complexity
physical	mental
feeling	intellect
nature	civilization/artifice
blue/green	yellow/gray
democracy	monarchy/aristocracy
immortality	mortality
before the Fall	after the Fall
the garden	the wasteland

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At first glance, some of these dualities are open to question. For example, do not we think of the *old* West? Yes, we do. But surely the "old West" was younger than the old East. And surely it is the young man who should go west.

Some of these relationships, though, are paradoxical even after closer scrutiny. If we associate corruption with the East, with the city slicker, then why is that we think of the West as "wild," lawless? Perhaps we do so because we are talking about different kinds of lawlessness, one physical (violent, exuberant, a product of honest energy) and one mental (product of decay and deceit).

But if the West is the realm of the body, how can we associate it with immortality? Surely mind is less mortal than flesh? There is a paradox here, but clearly decay and death are no part of the *idea* of characters like Boone, Crockett, the Lone Ranger, Superman, and James T. Kirk (the new West is *up*, of course). We think of their powers as constantly renewable, as having a permanence that corresponds to the frontier. Any one place is not the frontier for long, but the frontier itself is always there. Crockett is thus remembered "following his legend right into the West." Did he die at the Alamo? Well, nobody *saw* him die, did he? If men like these pass, they pass like King Arthur, into immortality. But, unlike Arthur, not on a darkling plain swept with confused alarms.

And they do not marry, either. Historically, Boone and Crockett may have had families, but we do not *think* of them as married — except to the frontier, to the wilderness, that is given female attributes whenever possible and is always moving ahead. They will, of course, have a male "sidekick" — a Tonto, a Chingachgook, or a Jimmy Olsen. And this male pair-bonding is another attribute that links them to youth, to a timeless boyhood. The American King Arthur is no last bulwark of the past; has no Guinevere, no Mordred; and is never betrayed by his Lancelot. (Modern variations of this theme are played out in shows like *Miami Vice*, where detectives Tubbs and Crockett, while hardly celibate, are married to each other by a code of loyalty and dedication that excludes serious commitments to women.)

Even the Western hero's identity is beyond ordinary definitions. He may wear a mask, like the Lone Ranger, or live a double life, like Superman or the Hulk. He may, like Natty Bumppo, have been raised as an Indian — as the Deerslayer — and derive some of his power from the double identity. This masked hero is not, of course, an American invention, but he is certainly well adapted to the requirements of the frontier: a hero unlimited by time and place and ordinary human bonds.

As Adam in the Garden before the Fall, he has amazing powers — physical powers, generally. He is not a wizard. (He has not yet succumbed to the fruit of the Tree.) He bends steel, not words, in his bare hands. But he is morally perfect. Even the Incredible Hulk, personification of righteous wrath, absolved of reason, never sins. Even the bad man he heaves like a discus lands in a lake or a haystack instead of a parking lot. And he

always puts the baby down gently. Even Jay Gatsby, the great bootlegger, seems in some ways innocent, absolved by the simplicity of his dream—a boy seduced by the kiss of the Dark Lady.

Is Huck Finn this kind of hero? Is he a man of the West? What kind of journey is he on? Is the raft his Silver, his Enterprise?

One difficulty here (a superficial one, I think) is that his direction of travel seems to be north to south—*from* the land of freedom *toward* the heart of darkness. But clearly the river itself is identified with freedom and renewal. Anywhere off the river, north or south, Huck and Jim face dangers created by various corruptions of civilization. Twain leaves us in no doubt at the end about Huck's place on the American map: he will "light out for the territory." As for "sivilization," he's "been there before."

Huckleberry Finn is sometimes taught as a book about growing up, but I believe to do this is to miss Huck's significance as an embodiment of the timeless youth in American mythology. He learns, certainly, about the viciousness of aristocracy, about the dangers of playing hurtful practical jokes, but these are really things that he already knew. They are part of his nature, and he only needs to be reminded. It is clear that Huck will not sell Jim. As long as he returns to his true nature, his soul is safe. It is only when he thinks too much that the sophistries of civilization can trap him into the idea of freedom as "sin." Falling back on instinct, he says, "all right, then, I'll *go* to Hell." Huck is, at the end, in many ways the same boy he was when he set out. There is a sort of stasis to his journey, as if it is a trip *out* of time. There are hints here and there—in his heart's instinctive response to strong and good-hearted young women like Mary Jane—of possibilities beyond boyhood. But I do not think these responses are unambiguously sexual.

If the spirit of energy, motion, freedom, honesty, and the other Western qualities is represented by the river, we would expect to find the East on the shore. And it is there that we find the fraudulent acts of the Duke and the King, the feuds of the Grangerfords, and the brutalities of slavery and mob justice. These things can, I believe, be associated with the East to the extent that they are made possible by the past, by traditions and their perversion, by the codes and hypocrisies of civilization. Huck's own father stands as a vivid exemplar of what civilization, with its alcohol and its bigotry, can do to the natural stock. It is pathetic to see this wreck of a man clutch at the legal code, and eventually at abduction, to reclaim a son that should have been *naturally* his. And surely there is a ghastly irony in his final appearance on the river—symbol of freedom and immortality—as a corpse.

But if the story is a parable, it is not a simple one. Huck is not the only boy in the story. There are two others: Buck Grangerford and Tom Sawyer. And I think the foregoing analysis makes a comparison of the three worthwhile—especially of Huck and Buck. The very similarity in their names suggests a comparison. The two boys themselves seem to hit if off right away, taking note of their common aversion to school and to getting

slicked up for church. "You got to stay always," says Buck. "We can just have booming times."

Booming, indeed. Within a few days Buck himself is booming away at the Shepherdsons and winds up dead, blasted by the shotguns of the enemy as he is trying to swim away—all of this while Huck watches from a tree. At the risk of the "banishment" the author threatens for all those "trying to find a moral" in the story, I would venture to find significance in the fact that the boy is struggling to escape into the river—symbol of the Western life force—when the bullets of his "civilized" inheritance strike him down. Huck's tree is certainly one of knowledge here. And the sight will always be with him:

> I wished I hadn't never come ashore that night to see such things. I ain't ever going to get shut of them—lots of times I dream about them.

What Huck has seen is an alternate self. Buck is a Huck Finn caught by the East—a "sivilized" Huck, raised in an inherited matrix of codes and loyalties. When Huck at the last says he has "been there before," he is talking about more than Miss Watson's posture lessons.

The association of the West with virtue and the East with evil is certainly too simplistic. It is worth noting that there are two kinds of aristocracy in the story: the fraudulent and the genuine. The Duke and King are fakes, as Huck easily recognizes. The Grangerfords, however, are the real thing, and Huck sees this, too. Colonel Grangerford "didn't ever have to tell anybody to mind their manners—everybody was always good-mannered where he was." This man and his sons are natural aristocrats. When the morning toast is made ("Our duty to you, Sir and Madam"), opportunities for burlesque seem to be passed over. Here is something that must be rejected, but must also be treated with seriousness.

Just as the West has its characteristic vices, the East has its characteristic virtues—represented here by the Grangerfords in their manners, their bravery, their respect for elders, their loyalty to a code. ("I don't like that shooting from behind a bush," says the Colonel.) All of these are part of a chivalric ideal—inherited from Europe, from the East—which Twain rejects every time he gets a chance. But it is in its noblest embodiment that the East is most dangerous. The Duke and King, after all, are transparent villains. But the subtle hypocrisies of the Grangerfords are more seductive and contain the origins of real tragedy. And the satire, as a result, must be more subtle. Thus, we see them taking their guns to church to hear sermons about brotherhood and "preforeordestination"—an oddly appropriate topic since they all seem foredoomed. And Huck says he likes "all that family, dead ones and all." It is the similarities between Buck and Huck, I believe, that focus our attention on the real dangers of the mythic East.

What about Tom, though? Is he an Easterner? Tom is an interesting combination of Western enthusiasm and Eastern romanticism. It is easy to become too reductive about Eastern and Western qualities, but certainly

Tom presents an approach to life as different from Huck's as is Buck's. Both Tom and Huck plan imaginative escapes during the story, but in Huck's case the whole point is the escape—the imagination is to provide a smokescreen by making it appear as though he has been murdered. In Tom's case, though, the whole point is imagination *itself*, the escape being irrelevant. And the "death" involved in Tom's escape very nearly turns out to be real: his own. His manipulation of Jim and Huck in working out the conventions of romantic escape-and-revenge fiction is good fun at the expense of those cliches, but it also says something about the dangers of the imagination, of making aesthetic goals ends in themselves. Tom's games come from books. He accepts as prescriptive and definitive the way things are done there. Civilization has got its hooks in Tom, too, by a different snare from what it used on Buck. And Tom is wounded by it.

What I hope this analysis suggests is that a treatment of at least some works of literature as *American* will profit from an attempt to place them against a symbolic landscape like the one I have outlined. I have not tried to suggest specific teaching strategies. I have tried instead to outline a general symbolic framework that I think will make a good point of departure. It is easy to oversimplify, of course. We must avoid the dangers of trying to read every work through the same lens. American authors are a very diverse lot. But whether the study is organized by chronology, theme, genre, or major author, I think the above approach will be useful to students beginning the study of our national literature.

The Missed Adventures of *Huckleberry Finn*

Kathleen E. Sullivan

Censorship has once again become a national issue. Since 1980 requests to some libraries for censorship of "obscene" material have gone from three to five requests a week to three to five a day.[1] One of the most popular targets of the censors has been Mark Twain's infamous *Huckleberry Finn*, a story about the misadventures of a boy on the Mississippi River. However, the case brought against *Huckleberry Finn* is far outweighed by the book's literary merit and importance to society.

Mark Twain's novel began turning heads from the moment of its publication, and the complaints against the book have lasted to the present day. The original reason the book was unacceptable was brought forth by the Massachusetts Public Library in 1885 when it refused to put the book on its shelves. The book was dismissed as one of the "dime novels" that plagued parents.[2] Louisa May Alcott said it was not fit for "pure-minded" girls and boys.[3] Librarians at this time believed their purpose was to elevate their public and ennoble them. They believed their best course of action was to discourage the reading of popular fiction, in which category *Huckleberry Finn* unfortunately fell. Critics attacked the book and reminded the public that it was their duty to protect them from poor literature or models of behavior.[4] The book was supposedly full of irreligion and mischief.[5] Furthermore, the language was totally ungenteel and coarse. As James Hubbard wrote in the *Boston Transcript*, "Huck said 'itch' and 'scratch' and said sweat when he should have said perspiration."[6] In short, the book was originally too much of a "boy's tale" to be considered worthy of any intelligent reader's attention. Today, however, the argument against the book is extremely different, as one can see from an example set in Fairfax County, Virginia, in April of 1982. The principal of Mark Twain Intermediate School recommended the removal of *Huckleberry Finn* from the school library.[7] The reason, according to assistant administrator John H. Wallace, was that the book was "poison . . . racist trash," and that the word "nigger" was insulting to blacks.[8] He later referred to the fact that Twain used the word "nigger" over two hundred times and made blacks out to "not be human."[9] Clearly the case against Twain had turned from "mischief" and "dime novels" to racism. Both arguments are compelling, but they are no justification for censorship. They do not stand up when

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pitted against Twain's artistic contribution and his socially important views on the role of the black man.

Historically the first argument against the book is disproved by Twain's highly commended literary style in *Huckleberry Finn*. The novel is no mere "boy's tale." In fact, one of the traits that makes the novel so distinctive is Twain's very fine way of telling the story through a young boy's eyes. Huck is indeed mischievous and "uncivilized," but he is also clear-sighted, straightforward, and uncomplicated. The mischief is only a mechanism for Twain's very fine sense of humor; however, the rest of Huck's perspective is an excellent literary tool by which Twain makes shrewd observations about America. Through Huck the reader sees the kind of small-town America that dotted the Mississippi River. Huck himself comes from a small town. The reader sees the kind of petty family disputes that arise in this environment from Huck's visitation to the Grangerfords. The type of justice dealt in a scene when a man is shot for being too drunk or disruptive was probably typical of justice in many towns. Huck brings out much of the flavor of the small town in his descriptions of the nightly "productions" by the duke and the king: the same group which keeps coming back for performances, the way publicity is left to first-night attenders telling their neighbors, the connivance between the town members to seek revenge for their over-priced tickets.

Huck's point of view is original, but equally original is Huck's speech. *Huckleberry Finn* is a landmark specifically because it did *not* use noble or formal speech, which was the only acceptable style for that time, according to the Massachusetts Public Library. Twain was one of the first to use dialect in his writing. Jim talks like a black man would in 1885; he uses words like "sho," "massuh," and "chile." Huck also speaks as a young Southern boy would; he says "ain't" instead of "isn't" and "sweat" instead of "perspiration." In short, the very things which the libraries originally criticized in *Huckleberry Finn* are what make the book a classic artistically. Huck and Jim are not characters of official nobility, and their dialect makes them more three-dimensional, earthy characters for the reader. Likewise, Huck's unflowery and boyish viewpoint present a cozier, homier kind of America with which the reader can identify.

The more modern charge that the book is racist completely ignors Twain's very enlightening stand on slavery. The book is anything but racist and makes a case against slavery in almost every way. The most common complaint is that Twain uses the word "nigger" throughout the book. John Wallace, the Fairfax administrator, said he would like to rewrite *Huckleberry Finn* and substitute the word "nigger" with a less offensive term.[10] This change would be a gross contradiction with the two aspects of the book which make it so original. Huck is a Southern boy of the nineteenth century; he *would* use "nigger" in reference to a black man. The word is certainly very offensive today, but for Huck it had no special connotation of Jim's being stupid or less than human; it was just a way for him to refer to a slave. The book is told through Huck's perspective; Huck uses "nigger"

and therefore Twain must use "nigger." Twain does not justify the use of the word, but rather he acknowledges that an uneducated white boy of that era would logically speak in such a way. Beyond this point, *Huckleberry Finn* clearly indicates that a black man is every bit as respectable as a white man. The best example is the black man himself, Jim. There is not a finer or kinder man than Jim. He calls Huck "honey" and loves him openly like a son. He is always patient and protective of Huck; he shields the boy from seeing his dead father, and he always waits for him during Huck's adventures on land. Jim may not make any brilliant observations, but neither does Huck. They are both bumpkins traveling down the Mississippi, and the book's nature is not one to foster overly intelligent or heady statements on any character's part.

Twain also fosters respect for Jim through the development of Huck and Jim's friendship. At first it is only Jim who gives, who is patient, who is loving, but eventually Huck returns that friendship to Jim. For example, when Huck first causes a rattlesnake to bite Jim, he feels regret but refuses to apologize. Later, however, after hurting Jim by playing a trick on him, Huck humbles himself and apologizes. The reader, through Huck, also comes to respect Jim. In fact, the only people in the novel who regard Jim as anything less than a companion and friend are the duke and king, who sell him back into slavery. These characters are wicked and without values, and Twain indicates that their viewpoints could hardly be worth much. Through the friendship of Huck and Jim, Twain makes a statement against the belittling of the black man through slavery. Huck defends Jim from slave catchers by telling them that Jim, "his pa," has the pox. Finally when Jim is recaptured and sold, Huck is enraged and saddened. He writes a letter to Jim's former mistress, but then decides he loves and respects Jim too much and rips the letter up. Instead, risking "hell," he embarks on an adventure to free Jim. Twain allows Huck to realize that a man's value is deeper than the color of his skin and slavery is an ugly system which reduces good men like Jim to property. The book is far from racist; it is quite the opposite.

Huckleberry Finn has been called "immoral" and "racist," but neither argument justifies censorship of the classic book by Mark Twain. Its artistic quality as well as its important statement about slavery and racism should ensure a permanent place on library shelves.

Notes

[1]Lani Gerson, Keith Stavely, "We Didn't Wait for the Censor," *Library Journal*, September 1, 1983, p. 1654.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 1656.

[4]Evenly Geller, *Forbidden Books in American Public Libraries*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984, p. 37.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 87.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

[9]"Principal in Fairfax County, Virginia, Recommends Restriction of *Huckleberry Finn*," *Publisher's Weekly*, April 23, 1982, p. 18.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 18.

[11]"Black Teacher Hopes to Rewrite *Huckleberry Finn*," *Jet*, July 26, 1982, p. 22.

[12]*Publisher's Weekly*, p. 18.

BEN NELMS NAMED NEXT EDITOR OF *ENGLISH JOURNAL*

Ben Nelms, professor of English education at the University of Missouri, Columbia, will be the next editor of *English Journal*, official publication of the Secondary Section of NCTE. Nelms succeeds Kenneth Donelson and Alleen Nilsen of Arizona State University, Tempe, who have coedited the journal since 1980. Nelms was appointed by the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. Skip Nicholson, South Pasadena High School, California, chaired the search committee.

Nelms' four-year term as editor will begin with the September 1987 issue. Beth Nelms, teacher of English at David H. Hickman High School, Columbia, Missouri, will serve as associate editor.

"*English Journal* should continue to be a professional journal for classroom teachers of English," Nelms said in discussing his future plans. "One of the hallmarks of the *Journal* in recent years has been its emphasis on practical issues in English. It should continue as a source of teaching ideas that can be adapted to other classrooms and other situations and a reliable forum for expressing and exploring teachers' concerns. The teacher of English is not just a consumer of research; that teacher's own experience is a valid source of research knowledge.

"*EJ* should address the whole subject of English: literature, language, composition, reading, and oral language," Nelms said. "I will seek a balance between process and product, and I will solicit articles on currently controversial topics."

At the University of Missouri, Nelms has been director of graduate studies in curriculum and instruction and of the Missouri Writing Project in that university's Department of English. He has served the National Council of Teachers of English in a variety of roles. Currently he is a member of the Executive Committee of the Conference on English Education (CEE), NCTE's constituent group for teacher educators, and of the CEE Editorial Board. He chairs the NCTE Yearbook Committee. From 1972 to 1978, Nelms edited *English Education*, official journal of CEE. He is a past president of the Missouri Association of Teachers of English, an NCTE affiliate, and a former member of the NCTE Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification.

Among Nelms' recent research activities is a follow-up study of the Missouri Writing Project. At present, he is conducting studies of factors involved in tenth-graders' responses to poetry; of children's fantasy, 1850-1950; and of fiction for adolescents written since 1942. He has contributed articles to a number of professional journals.

English Journal, established in 1912, is published monthly, September through May. Advertising for *EJ* is handled at NCTE Headquarters. Call or write the Advertising Department, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 328-3870. Subscriptions are also handled through Headquarters (address and phone above).

Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be sent to Ben F. Nelms, Editor, *English Journal*, at this address: 216 Townsend Hall, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO 65211.

Hemingway's Hold on Readers

Edgar H. Thompson

Why is it, that years after reading something Hemingway wrote, you still have a feeling about it, even though you can no longer remember the details? How is he able to keep you reading a book where the characters don't seem to do anything of great consequence or value? What is it about his characters and some of the images he creates that stay with you for a long time, sometimes even haunt you? These are important questions to answer, because, though I am certain many of our students have these same questions, they are not aware that they have them until a long time after they have read something written by Hemingway. They just know that they do not understand what he is trying to say, and they do not like him very much.

Of course, one broad answer to the questions I have just posed has to do with Hemingway's style. He once said that in writing it is important to cut as much as possible out of what you first write but to do so with such precision and skill that what is left suggests all that has been removed (*A Moveable Feast*, p. 75 and *Death in the Afternoon*, p. 192). Hemingway learned how to do this in part as a result of his work as a correspondent for the *Toronto Star* and other publications, his major source of income during his "writing apprenticeship" in Paris in the twenties. Sending cables back to the home office was expensive, so reporters had to make every word count. For example, according to Cowley, a cable that read "**KEMAL INSWARDS UNBURNED SMYRNA GUILTY GREEKS**" might end up being translated into the following by a staff reporter at home:

> Mustapha Kemal in an exclusive interview with the correspondent of the International News Service, **[KEMAL INSWARDS]** denied vehemently that the Turkish forces had any part in the burning of Smyrna **[UNBURNED SMYRNA]**. The city, Kemal stated, was fired by incendiaries in the troops of the Greek rear guard before the first Turkish patrols entered the city **[GUILTY GREEKS]**. (p. 49)

Beyond his newspaper experience, Hemingway was strongly influenced by those writers and artists around him during his Paris days. Ezra Pound told him to edit out adjectives and adverbs and to use strong verbs to convey the action, the urgency of the moment. From Gertrude Stein he learned to use her "colloquial—in appearance—American style, full of repeated words, prepositional phrases, and present participles, the style in which he wrote his early published stories" (Cowley, p. 50). He was

A faculty member at Emory and Henry College, Herb Thompson has just been elected to the Executive Board as College Member-at-large.

also strongly influenced by what he read. He always felt that he was in competition not only with contemporary writers but with great writers of the past. In his letters and non-fiction pieces, even in some of his fiction, he frequently commented on how he was doing in relation to some of these writers.

> I started out very quiet and I beat Mr. Turgenev. Then I trained hard and I beat Mr. de Maupassant. I've fought two draws with Mr. Stendahl, and I think I had an edge in the last one. But nobody's going to get me in the ring with Mr. Tolstoy [regarding war writing] unless I'm crazy or I keep getting better." (Ross, p. 23)

The art that he saw in Europe and the music that he listened to also influenced his writing. He was sensitive to what the artists were trying to accomplish in their work and tried to achieve the same level of craft in his writing.

> I can make a landscape like Mr. Paul Cezanne. I learned how to make a landscape from Mr. Paul Cezanne by walking through the Luxembourg Museum a thousand times with an empty gut, and I'm pretty sure that if Mr. Paul was around, he would like the way I make them and be happy that I learned it from him . . . In the first paragraphs of *Farewell*, I used the word "and" consciously over and over the way Mr. Johann Sebastian Bach used a note in music when he was emitting counterpoint. I can almost write like Mr. Johann sometimes—or, anyway, so he would like it. (Ross, p. 36)

Whatever the source of his style, as he developed it over the years, Hemingway was able to do something that many writers are unable to accomplish. When you finish reading many works by other authors, your sense of theme is usually intellectual in nature, having to do with the ideas that have been touched upon in the work and ones that have been "kicked up" in you as you were reading. With Hemingway, however, things are a bit different. He creates his themes *within* his readers through his style, and this creation, at least initially, is more at a feeling level than an intellectual one.

For example, in one of the Nick Adams stories, "Ten Indians," the fictionalized Hemingway, young Nick Adams, has just returned home from a Fourth of July celebration with his neighbors, the Garners. They have kidded him about being in love with a little Indian girl, Prudence "Prudie" Mitchell. He takes all the ribbing in a good-natured manner. When he gets home, his father is waiting up for him. His father gets Nick some food out of the ice box, and Nick sits down to eat it. Notice what then happens in the following conversation:

> His father sat watching him eat and filled his glass from the pitcher. Nick drank and wiped his mouth on his napkin. His father reached over to the shelf for the pie. He cut Nick a big piece. It was huckleberry pie.
>
> "What did you do, Dad?"
>
> "I went out fishing in the morning."
>
> "What did you get?"
>
> "Only Perch."
>
> His father sat watching Nick eat the pie.
>
> "What did you do this afternoon?" Nick asked.
>
> "I went for a walk up by the Indian camp."

"Did you see anybody?"

"The Indians were all in town getting drunk."

"Didn't you see anybody at all?"

"I saw your friend, Prudie."

"Where was she?"

"She was in the woods with Frank Washburn. I ran onto them. They were having quite a time."

His father was not looking at him.

"What were they doing?"

"I didn't stay to find out."

"Tell me what they were doing."

"I don't know," his father said. "I just heard them threshing around."

"How did you know it was them?"

"I saw them."

"I thought you said you didn't see them."

"Oh, yes, I saw them."

"Who was it with her?" Nick asked.

"Frank Washburn."

"Were they were they -"

"Were they what?"

"Were they happy?"

"I guess so."

His father got up from the table and went out the kitchen screen door. When he came back Nick was looking at his plate. He had been crying.

"Have some more?" His father picked up the knife to cut the pie.

"No," said Nick.

"You better have another piece."

"No, I don't want any."

His father cleared off the table.

"Where were they in the woods?" Nick asked.

"Up back of the camp."

Nick looked at his plate. His father said, "You better go to bed, Nick."

"All right." Nick went into his room, undressed, and got into bed. He heard his father moving around in the living room. Nick lay in the bed with his face in the pillow.

"My heart's broken," he thought. "If I feel this way my heart must be broken." (pp. 20-21)

Hemingway captures very clearly what it is like when you find out someone you are in love with is unfaithful to you. Such an experience is always painful, but the pain is especially great when it happens to you the first time, as it is for Nick in this story. What makes it even worse for Nick is that he finds out about Prudie's unfaithfulness from someone he trusts. Hemingway portrays Nick's father as a caring person. Nick's father knows that his news is going to hurt Nick, but he does not lie to him. Instead, he gets Nick a snack, as any caring father would do, engages in some flat, ordinary conversation, and then tells Nick the truth in a straightforward manner. But as he tells Nick, he does not look at him. Nick's father respects his son's privacy, even to the point of leaving for a while when he knows that Nick may want to cry. He does not want to make things worse by being responsible for causing his son to lose face in front of him.

Hemingway also does a masterful job of portraying Nick in this scene. When Nick first begins to suspect what Prudie had been doing, he tries

to push his father to get more specific. His father does not, but still, he communicates the message by using two words: "threshing around." These are damning words in Nick's mind, for at this point he knows that Prudie has been unfaithful. He tries to appear unconcerned in front of his father, but he cannot help himself. Even after his father comes back into the room, he asks, "Where were they in the woods?" perhaps hoping that his father has been mistaken. There has been no mistake. His heart is broken, even though, when he awakes the next morning, it is a long while before he remembers that this is true. Though he is not aware of it at that moment, Nick's feelings for Prudie were probably not those of love, but rather ones of infatuation—in love with the idea of being in love—or perhaps simply physical lust.

Of particular note in the relationship between Nick and his father is what they know but do not say. Both Nick and his father know what Prudie was doing with Frank Washburn in the woods, but they never use graphic language to describe what happened. Fathers and sons may use crude language in each other's presence, but they never use it to refer to someone they care about.

What statement is Hemingway trying to make? What is the theme of this story? Is the theme one of betrayal, of what it is like when someone has been unfaithful to you? Is it the caring relationship between fathers and sons? Is it how much is communicated, not by what is said but by what is implied? Is the theme all of these things and more? What is Hemingway up to here? Most of us arrive at this point when we finish many, if not all, of Hemingway's works. We sense what the theme is, but we have a hard time putting it into words. Still, intuitively we feel that we know what Hemingway was trying to say.

Whatever you feel after reading something written by Hemingway, you need to recognize that the way you feel is not just chance, though certainly there is an element of chance depending on your individual background. Hemingway controls your response as a reader largely by the way he organizes his dialogue and by the words and details he chooses to include. We have already seen how this plays a part in "Ten Indians," but he also does the same thing in his other writing. Frequently, he includes a detail that initially does not seem important but takes on a much greater significance as the work progresses. For example, in the story "Indian Camp," Nick accompanies his father, who is a doctor, and his Uncle George to the Indian camp to help a woman who has been trying to deliver a baby for two days. As the lady cries out in pain, Nick wants his father to stop her from screaming. His father says, "I haven't any anesthetic . . . But her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are unimportant" (7). Of course, this is a reasonable response by a doctor, since pain is a part of childbirth, and as a result, we as readers skip right over this detail. Later, however, when we find out that the woman's husband, who is lying on a bunk above his wife with a badly cut foot, kills himself because he cannot stand what is happening, we are jolted. Apparently,

the screams did mean something to him. Although Nick is still young and does not understand everything that is happening, we as readers are reminded that many things in life are not what they seem to be.

The same themes of "coming of age" and "things aren't always what they seem" are developed in many of the Nick Adams stories; but again, the themes are developed in such a way that, even though we are reading what Hemingway wrote and entering into the fictional world he has created, we still identify so closely with Nick that it is almost as though we see ourselves in Nick. In "The Battler," Nick has just been thrown off a train by a brakeman. Nick is disgusted with himself.

> That lousy crut of a brakeman. He would get him some day. He would know him again. That was a fine way to act. "Come here, kid," he said. "I got something for you." He had fallen for it. What a lousy kid thing to have done. They should never suck him in that way again. "Come here, kid. I got something for you." Then wham and he lit on his hands and knees beside the track. Nick rubbed his eye. There was a big bump coming up. He would have a black eye, all right. It ached already. That son of a crutting brakeman. (p. 35)

Notice how life-like this description is. Nick complains about what happens, repeats what was said, complains again, swearing that he has learned from the experience, repeats what is said again, and finally vows revenge. This pattern is very familiar to me because I go through a similar one when something bad has happened to me. I always swear that I will act differently next time, just as Nick does in this instance.

Hemingway does not present the themes in his writing in nice, neatly packaged formulas. Understanding his themes is not a matter of just thinking about what happened in the story and coming to an intellectual conclusion. You both *feel* and *know* what he meant, even though he never says it explicitly and you as the reader cannot say it clearly either.

This difficulty on the part of the reader in identifying and articulating themes is one of the characteristics of Hemingway's writing that makes it so difficult for high school and even college students to read his work. They have either been taught or have learned certain things about how literature is supposed to be structured and what it is they are to look for in things they read. Hemingway does not let them get away so easily. Really to figure out Hemingway, you have to examine your own experience in light of what feelings have been churned up in you by your reading. Older readers may be able to say, "Yea, I know how that feels. He's right on target," even though they cannot clearly state what the theme is. High school and college students, however, may not have enough life experience to reach this same point. A college professor once told me he felt that you needed to be over forty years of age to understand what Shakespeare was trying to say in *King Lear*. In many ways, I think the same prerequisite exists for reading Hemingway. You need to have lived for a few years, had your idealism tarnished a bit, before you can be open to all that he has to offer.

Still, we can inspire an interest, as opposed to a loathing, for Hemingway's

work if we can make students aware of the nuances of his style. I think this awareness is probably best achieved by first having students read some of his short fiction. However, even in short fiction, Hemingway's style may overwhelm students. An alternative plan might be to have your students spend some time reading some of his non-fiction, which is a little looser in style than his fiction and, as a result, a little more accessible for students. Reading his non-fiction can be followed by a comparison with short passages taken from his longer fictional works. Teachers can lead students to an understanding of how Hemingway becomes much more controlled, more artistic (like Cezanne, for instance) in his use of language and his selection of detail when he draws on experiences from his own life as the basis for a fictional situation.

For example, though many of the story-lines and scenes in Hemingway's novels seem to be based on experiences in his life, the relationship between his life and his fiction is frequently not a direct one. In his essay "Christmas on the Roof of the World," he portrays a romantic, whimsical vision of what it is like to spend Christmas in Europe in exotic, alluring settings. If your students read this essay, they will then be able to compare it to Hemingway's description, in Chapters 38-41 of *A Farewell to Arms*, of Frederic and Catherine's life in Switzerland after they escape from Italy. The description in both of these selections obviously comes from the same source, but the content is different because Hemingway is trying to achieve two different things. In the non-fiction piece, the goal is to describe and to give a feeling of place. In the fictional selection, the purpose is also, in part, to describe; but, beyond this superficial purpose, Hemingway is trying to achieve a two-fold fictional aim. First, he creates an idyllic life as a foil to the harsh, meaningless life Frederic has known in Italy as a soldier. Second, he is setting readers up for the end of this so-called perfect life, the still-birth of their child and Catherine's subsequent death. Life, after all, is meaningless, and no one escapes death, destruction.

Similar kinds of comparisons can be made between other pieces of Hemingway's non-fiction and fiction. You might try comparing Hemingway's essay "Notes on Dangerous Game: The Third Tanganyika Letter" with his short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" or his essays "Bull Fighting a Tragedy" and "Pamplona in July" with the portion of *The Sun Also Rises* that takes place in Pamplona. Another possibility is to have your students compare the one-paragraph description (239-240) of a fishing incident in "On the Blue Water: A Gulf Stream Letter," written in 1936, with the later fictionalized version, *The Old Man and the Sea*, published in 1952.

What I have suggested here will not clear up all the problems your students have with Hemingway. In fact, a great deal of what he wrote is better for your students to read when they are mature adults. Still, anyone who can create a theme, make it come to life inside us, make us feel it as opposed to think it, is worthy of consideration by both high school and college students.

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A Novel Worth Teaching: Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*

Vivian F. Daughtry

The Catcher in the Rye (New York: Bantam, 1951) was greeted with enthusiastic popular response when it appeared in the 1950's, and J. D. Salinger became America's most talked about contemporary author during the first decade of his literary career.[1] Ironically however, the author whom Warren French called "the voice of a generation"[2] has not been read, indeed may not even have been heard of, by many high school students today. The blame may be laid partly on Salinger's reclusive insistence on privacy and his regrettable failure to produce anything as noteworthy after *Catcher*. In some cases it has been the heavy hand of censorship that has pulled the novel from the shelves of English classrooms. However, this is a novel worth bringing to the attention of students. Conscientious teachers of literature must not allow *The Catcher in the Rye* to become the dust catcher in the English bookroom.

The novel may be introduced to secondary students as an example of the archetypal quest. Sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield sets out on an odyssey, a search for love and acceptance, meets and falls victim to numerous perils along the way, and eventually emerges victorious. The first and last chapters provide a neat frame revealing that Holden is telling his story to an unnamed psychologist in a rest home in California. He has suffered a breakdown after flunking out of his third prep school. The novel is a flashback which covers a time span of four days. The odyssey begins on the Saturday of a big game at Pincey Prep, a boy's school in Pennsylvania, when Holden leaves there for a frantic three days in New York.

Students will immediately recognize the first person point of view, but consideration should also be given to the nature of the narrator. What type of person is he? Can he be trusted to give an honest account of his experiences? It has already been noted that Holden is in some sort of rest home or mental hospital, but does that mean that his story should be dismissed as the ravings of an insane teenager? Because the first person point of view is used, Holden's character is revealed implicitly, by indirect suggestion. The narrative technique approaches stream of consciousness with what appears to be numerous digressions, but these are actually carefully controlled by the author to enhance his portrait of Holden. Holden's confession has the ring of truth about it, even though he says,"But I'm

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crazy" (p. 102) and "I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life" (p. 16). While he does occasionally lie to others, he does not lie to himself.

> I'd only been in two fights in my life, and I lost *both* of them. I'm not too tough. I'm a pacifist, if you want to know the truth. (pp. 45-46)

His ability to admit his faults and weaknesses gives credence to his account. The unseen and unheard psychologist fades out of the imagination, and it is as though the reader is hearing Holden talk to himself, clarifying his experiences in his own mind; so there is no need for pretense.

While he is obviously far from perfect, teens may identify with Holden because of his weaknesses. In the scheme of Northrop Frye, Holden is the *less* than ordinary hero. He is a misfit in society like Thomas Hardy's Tess d'Urberville and Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas but not a tragic victim since it is in his power to save himself; and in the end he does. He is intelligent, but he has failed out of three prep schools. He has a poor relationship with his parents; and, when he flunks out of Pincey Prep, he cannot bring himself to face them right away. He is hypersensitive, and his concern extends to the ducks in the lake in Central Park in winter. Having grown over six inches in the last year, he is awkward physically, and he is naive about sex. He smokes too much, curses too much, and drinks too much. He is a completely believable character with whom students may empathize.

Salinger's skill in depicting Holden's language is a great part of what makes this novel worth reading. As Richard Wright admitted doing in *Native Son*,[3] Salinger plays the role of literary ventriloquist. Holden embodies the author's thought, "but the language Salinger chooses to give him is so artfully controlled that the voice seems to come from some other source than the author."[4] The language represents the informal, colloquial speech of the teenager of the 1950's:

> If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. (p. 1)

Holden consistently uses slang and imprecise nouns and adjectives particularly the word "phony," which he uses to describe everything from the headmaster of his boarding school to the movies. He also occasionally uses nouns and adverbs as adjectives, as in "that David Copperfield kind of crap." Another peculiarity of his speech is his tendency to tack "if you want to know the truth" on to the end of his statements.

Despite the possibility of problems with censorship, the crude language that Salinger puts into Holden's mouth should not be ignored. Although some students and parents may find the use of four-letter words objectionable, the language is artistically defensible. On the issue of the novel and censorship, Edward P. J. Corbett argues that "given the kind of character that figures as the hero, no other language was possible."[5]. The four-letter words peppered throughout the novel are a major evidence

of the false bravado that characterizes Holden. It is a part of his ploy to appear older and more sophisticated than he is.

> His swearing is habitual and so unconsciously ritualistic that is contributes to rather than diminishes the theme of innocence that runs through the novel.[6]

The most objectionable four-letter word in the book, which Holden finds written on the schoolhouse walls and again in the museum, is not a word that Holden uses. It exists in the novel solely so that Holden may attempt to wipe it out. Parents and students can be assured that, despite the language Salinger uses, the novel actually makes a statement against immorality, profanity, and perversion.

Holden rebels against insincerity and established conventions, and this theme runs throughout the novel. Holden articulates what he finds distasteful in adult society to his date, Sally Hayes:

> It's everything. I hate living in New York and all. Taxicabs and Madison Avenue buses with the drivers and all always yelling at you to get out at the rear door, and being introduced to phony guys that call the Lunts angels, and going up and down in elevators when you just want to go outside, and guys fitting your pants all the time at Brooks. . . . (p. 130)

Holden rejects the Twentieth Century big-city demands for conformity and dreams of an idyllic life in a log cabin in the West. Holden continues his explanation to Sally by describing what he finds objectionable about Pincey Prep:

> "You ought to go to a boys' school sometime. Try it sometime," I said. "It's full of phonies, and all you do is study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddam cadillac some day, and you have to keep making believe you give a damn if the football team loses, and all you do is talk about girls and liquor and sex all day and everybody sticks together in these dirty little goddam cliques." (p. 131)

Holden's animosity, therefore, transcends the barriers of age. He is a misfit in society because what he protests is what most people accept as typical middle class values and mores.

While Holden's hostility is not limited to adults, they are generally portrayed negatively in the novel. His parents are rarely mentioned, but his relationship with them is clearly poor since he avoids facing them after he leaves school. He describes his mother by saying that she "gets very hysterical" (p. 51), and his father is too busy working to take the time to see Phoebe in her school play. Spencer, the good intentioned, elderly history teacher whom Holden visits just before leaving Pincey Prep, lectures him on his failure to apply himself and forces him to listen to his own examination answers. Although basically fond of him, Holden describes Spencer as a pathetic and rather repulsive figure:

> The minute I went in, I was sort of sorry I'd come. He was reading the *Atlantic Monthly*, and there were pills and medicine all over the place and everything smelled like Vicks Nose Drops. It was pretty depressing. I'm not too crazy about sick people anyway. What made it more depressing, old Spencer had on this sad, ratty old bathrobe that he was probably born in or something. I don't much like to

> see old guys in their pajamas and bathrobes anyway. Their humpy old chests are always showing. And their legs. Old guys legs, at beaches and places, always look so white and unhairy. (p. 7)

Seeing Spencer this way depresses Holden, and he leaves without receiving the guidance he desperately needs. When Holden turns to Mr. Antolini, one of his former teachers, he is offered academic rhetoric and philosophy rather than what he craves most—compassion and understanding. Mr. Antolini makes what Holden interprets as a homosexual advance, and Holden flees in revulsion. Whether or not Mr. Antolini's patting of Holden's head as he sleeps is actually a homosexual advance or not is unclear, and Holden himself later wonders if he were not mistaken. But either way, Mr. Antolini and the other adults in the novel who influence Holden fail to give him the help he needs.

On the other hand, children are idealized in the novel. This is especially true of Holden's young sister Phoebe, who is ten years old.

> You should see her. You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your whole life. She's really smart. I mean she's had all A's ever since she started school. (p. 67)

It is Phoebe who seems to understand Holden best, and it is she who identifies what is wrong with Holden when she says, "You don't like anything that's happening" (p. 169).

The title of the novel is a misquote from a poem by Robert Burns. Its relevance to the story is explained by Holden as he tells Phoebe about his ambition in life:

> Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and *catch* them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy. (p. 173)

Holden realizes how completely unrealistic his ambition is. As the catcher, he wants to be a fielder or protector of the innocent. It is in his role as catcher or protector that he tries to rub out the obscenity on the wall of Phoebe's school. When he later sees the same obscenity in the museum at an exhibit frequented by children, he realizes the futility of his efforts. When Phoebe declares her intention of accompanying him when he says he will run away to a solitary life in a log cabin in the West, Holden knows that he cannot take responsibility for her, and he loves her too much to just leave her. Near the end of the novel, during the carrousel scene, it is clear that Holden has abandoned his catcher philosophy:

> All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them. (p. 211)

Holden now realizes that the essential corruption of the world cannot be escaped, and he decides to go home and face his problems.

While symbol hunting is a popular but dangerous literary sport, Holden's red hunting cap assumes importance because of the attention Salinger gives it. Instead of wearing the cap in the conventional way, Holden wears it backwards, like a catcher's cap in baseball; so it becomes a symbol of Holden's role as the "catcher in the rye." Maxwell Geismar sees it as "his talisman of true rebellion and creativity."[7]

Some critics find the ending of the novel unsatisfactory, and John Aldridge charges that Holden ends the novel as he begins it—"cynical, defiant, and blind."[8] However, Holden has changed and grown at the end of the book. He has abandoned his catcher philosophy, as the carrousel scene proves. It is also significant, that, when he describes his brother D. B.'s girlfriend near the end of the novel, he does not call her "phony": he says, "She was pretty affected" (p. 213). Furthermore he recognizes the idiocy of his psychologist's repeated asking if he is going to apply himself when he returns to school. He answers, "I *think* I am, but how do I know?" (p. 213). His statement that he misses everybody, including Stradlater, Ackley, and Maurice, the pimp who steals from him in New York, reveals that he has made peace with himself and is beginning to accept the world as it is. Holden may not be completely "cured," but he is well on the road to recovery.

In conclusion, *Catcher* is a novel that belongs in the classroom because there is still much that Salinger's teenage protagonist can say to today's youth. Many teens will identify with Holden's alienation from adults and the conventions of society, with his painful experience related to adolescent growth and development, and with his frustration as he searches for identity. Whether they identify with Holden or not, young readers will discover with Holden that running away solves nothing; life's problems must be met head on. That is surely a lesson worth passing on to students.

Notes

[1]Warren French *J. D. Salinger*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976, p. 68.

[2]French, p. 47.

[3]Richard Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," *Native Son*, New York: Harper and Row, 1940, p. xxxi.

[4]James Lundquist, *J. D. Salinger*, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1979, p. 57.

[5]Lundquist, p. 56.

[6]Lundquist, p. 56.

[7]Maxwell Geismar, *American Moderns from Rebellion to Conformity*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1958, p. 196.

[8]John Alderidge, *In Search of Heresy*, quoted by Warren French in *J. D. Salinger*, p. 104.

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Suggested classroom activities for *The Catcher in the Rye*:

1. Examine the language used by Holden Caulfield in this novel. Does it represent the way that teens talk today? Compare Holden's slang words and expressions with popular slang words and expressions used by today's teens. Ambitious students may find examples of Holden's tendency to adapt nouns into adjectives and adverbs. (See Donald P. Costello's "The Language of *The Catcher in the Rye*," *American Speech*, October, 1958, pp. 172-181.)
2. Phoebe accuses Holden of not liking anything, and he rejects the idea of being a scientist or lawyer. What occupation would Holden be suited for? Fill out a resume which includes a brief biographical sketch for Holden.
3. Like many popular TV shows, this novel is episodic. Select one of the episodes from Holden's life to act out for the class. Assign roles, write out a script, and rehearse. Bring in any needed props and arrange for any necessary sound effects. This may be videotaped for viewing at a later date.
4. Select an object from your own life that is as meaningful to you as Allie's catcher's mitt was to Holden and write a detailed description of the object. Be sure to include an explanation of why the object is meaningful to you.
5. Holden has an especially close relationship with his little sister Phoebe, and he expresses a great deal of love and admiration for his younger brother Allie, who died. Compare and contrast your relationship with your siblings to that of Holden's.
6. Holden denounces the general atmosphere of "phoniness" at Pincey Prep, with its overemphasis on winning at sports, the cliques, and all the talk about alcohol and sex. Compare and contrast the atmosphere at your school with that of Pincey Prep. Is phoniness a problem at your school?
7. Compare and contrast Holden to other teenage protagonists you have read about in fiction. Good examples would be Huckleberry Finn, Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, or John in Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*

8. Trace the numerous references to catching and falling in this novel. What is their function?
9. Research the life of J. D. Salinger and note to what extent the author's personal experiences are mirrored in the novel. Warren French's "That David Copperfield Kind of Crap" found in *J. D. Salinger* on pages 3135 will be helpful. This book is included in the bibliography.
10. Read a critical evaluation of *The Catcher in the Rye* and write a reaction to it. J. D. O'Hara's "No Catcher in the Rye," which may be found in *The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism*, may be used. This book is included in the bibliography.
11. Holden tells his story from some sort of rest home or mental hospital. Is Holden insane? If so, list evidences of his insanity that are found in the novel. If not, what *is* the matter with Holden?
12. Some critics find the ending of this novel unsatisfactory and vague in its explanation of what happens to Holden. Write a new ending which reveals what you think happens to Holden once he is released from the hospital.
13. Most of the action of the novel takes place in New York, and Salinger makes frequent references to actual places such as Central Park, Radio City Music Hall, and the American Museum of Natural History. How important is the setting to the plot of this story? Could the novel just as easily have been set in a small town in Iowa, for example?
14. The seemingly puzzling statements that Holden makes at the very end of the novel are regarded by James Lundquist as Zen riddles or Koan. Research Zen philosophy and prepare a report for the class.

A Separate Peace: A Novel Worth Teaching

W. Michael Reed

I have to give much credit to *A Separate Peace* (New York: Bantam, 1959) for sparking and then cultivating my interest in English years ago when I was a junior in high school. After my parents had *moved me* from Florida to Virginia before my senior year in high school, I was pleased that one of the novels assigned in my senior Advanced Literature class was *Separate Peace*. When I was faced with the task of selecting a topic for my senior paper (remember when senior papers were required?), I naturally chose John Knowles and his works. Back in 1967-68, there wasn't much published on John Knowles; so I wrote to him for more information. I was impressed (and relieved) when he wrote back. He dodged my question of how much of *A Separate Peace* was real (I knew he had to be Gene; I wasn't sure if he would boldly admit that he had been "responsible" for someone's death—if, in fact, that were the case). But that disappointment was easily offset by the letter itself; I was one of a few seniors—if not the only one—who could list in my bibliography an author's letter written *directly to me*.

My infatuation with and appreciation of that novel did not stop with my senior year in high school. Years later—after an undergraduate degree, three years in the Army, and then a masters—I took my first teaching position as a high school English teacher at Warren County High School in Front Royal. During my five years of teaching, I introduced over 250 sophomores to the novel; and, when I team-taught a seminar for talented and gifted language arts students, the novel was included as part of a unit entitled "Law and Literature." (We put Gene on trial; he was found innocent. Even to this day, I'm not sure I agree with that verdict.) As honest as high school students are, I feel quite confident when I state that they enjoyed the book.

And now as a trainer of prospective English teachers at West Virginia University, I include the novel in one of my classes "Fiction for Adolescents." One of the issues we address in that class is the literary merit of novels identified as Young Adult (YA) novels. Critics of the genre claim that there is little literary merit in many of the novels and including them in the English curriculum reduces the literature class to a reading class. Proponents claim that many of the YA novels have literary merit and

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including them promotes reading and literary analysis which will better prepare students for the "classics." Neither side is totally right or wrong, I believe. The issue is still active, and the most sensible solution seems to be finding high-interest novels that also have literary merit.

When thinking about the theme of this issue of the *Virginia English Bulletin*, I felt addressing certain factors related to high interest and literary merit might provide an effective framework for presenting my case that *A Separate Peace* is worth teaching. After all, I had "lived with" that novel for almost 20 years. And, it had survived my transformation from a high school student whose primary criterion for literature selection was the interest factor to a high school teacher/university professor whose primary criterion for literature selection was/is literary merit. It seems to me that, when we consider whether or not a literary work is worth teaching, we need to consider the interest factor (based on student interest, not teacher interest) and literary merit (which the teacher is best qualified to identify). Given my impressions of *A Separate Peace* as both a student and an instructor, I feel that I am especially qualified to address the question, Is *A Separate Peace* a novel worth teaching? Quite briefly, my answer is yes; my lengthier reasons follow.

The Framework of Literary Merit

In some research that Bob Small and I are collaborating on (Bob, at Virginia Tech; I, at West Virginia), *A Separate Peace* has emerged as one of the novels that has both high interest and literary merit (other novels in this group are *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*; *The Outsiders*; *The Kolokol Papers*; *Seventeenth Summer*; *The Wave*; and *Counter Play*). We have attempted to identify the literary merit of certain YA novels by having the students enrolled in the "Fiction for Adolescents" classes at both institutions respond to a modified version of the 22 criteria developed by Stephen Dunning in 1962. The respondents have reacted to the statement, "For each of the items, select one of the choices that best describes how well this novel meets each criterion," using a four-point, Likert-scale response-choice format (1 = extremely poorly; 2 = poorly; 3 = well; and, 4 = excellently). We have asked 80 students—predominantly prospective English teachers—to evaluate a group of novels based on each criterion.

The numeric data I will present along with each of the 22 criteria are the mean scores (possible range 1-4, with 4 being excellent) for each criterion based on the responses of 28 of our students: eight males and 20 females. Because *A Separate Peace* has no major female characters, I performed an unpaired student t-Test with gender as the independent variable to determine if the male and female respondents felt significantly different about the novel when considering the criteria. Although it would not be surprising if the males rated the novel more highly, such a result would be somewhat disturbing since we would hope that teachers would not allow their gender to be a factor when selecting literature for classes. There was not a statistically significant difference in their responses: $t(26) = .683$, p(two-

tailed) = .501; the mean for males was 75.25 (standard deviation = 8.38) and the mean for females was 77.65 (standard deviation = 8.41). Given virtually equal means and standard deviations, we can assume that males and females will respond equivalently, on the average, when addressing the literary merit of *A Separate Peace* via the Dunning instrument.

The criteria comprise five categories: (1) style of the novel (items 1-3); (2) structure of the novel (items 4-6); (3) characterization in the novel (items 7-14); (4) themes of the novel (items 15-18); and, (5) adult role and adult-adolescent relationships in the novel (items 19-22).

A Separate Peace scored a mean average of 76.79 with 72 being "well." In the following discussion, I will present the means for each item and then choose one criterion from each of the five categories to illustrate *A Separate Peace*'s relative high degree of literary merit.

Style of the Novel

Based on the responses of the 28 English education students, the style of *A Separate Peace* ranked high. The mean of the three style-related criteria was 3.41, or about mid-way between good and excellent. Style is based on the following three criteria (the response mean is given in parentheses after the criterion):

1. The style is capable of contributing to the reader's aesthetic appreciation. It has both clarity and beauty of expression. (3.39)
2. The language of the conversations and descriptions create a sense of reality. (3.39)
3. The vocabulary and figurative language are generally effective rather than pedestrian. (3.46)

The language of the conversations and descriptions create a sense of reality. The conversations between Gene and Finny nicely reflect the changing emotional states of their relationship which range from envy to hostility to guilt, as seen through Gene's eyes. Certainly at the beginning of the novel, Gene envies Finny: "Phineas in those days almost always moved in groups the size of hockey teams" (p. 7); and, "even as a Lower Middler Phineas had been the best athlete in the school" (p. 8). To some extent, the reader could speculate that Gene's status at Devon was highly dependent upon Finny's choosing him as his best friend. With that goes prestige but also a determination of his worth through the strengths of someone else.

Later in the novel, Gene tires of the person he needs to be in order to remain Finny's best friend but still has difficulty breaking from this hold: "I went along; I never missed a meeting [of the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session]. At that time it never occurred to me to say, 'I don't feel like it tonight,' which was the plain truth every night. I was subject to the dictates of my mind, which gave me the maneuverability of a strait jacket. 'We're off, pal,' Finny would call out, and acting against every instinct of my nature, I went without a thought of protest" (p. 26).

Finally, Gene stands up to Finny—or perhaps more importantly, for

his true feelings. When Finny announces that he and Gene need to go to the tree to oversee Leper's jumping from the tree—part of the initiation for joining the Suicide Society—Gene opposes by claiming he needs to study.

> 'I didn't know you needed to *study*,' he said simply. 'I didn't think you ever did. I thought it just came to you.'
>
> It seemed that he had made some kind of parallel between my studies and his sports. He probably thought anything you were good at came without effort. He didn't know yet that he was unique.
>
> I couldn't quite achieve a normal speaking voice. 'If I need to study, then so do you.'
>
> 'Me?' He smiled faintly. 'Listen, I could study forever and I'd never break a C. But it's different for you, you're good. You really are. If I had a brain like that, I'd—I'd have my head cut open so people could look at it.'
>
> 'Now wait a second . . .'
>
> He put his hands on the back of the chair and leaned toward me. 'I know. We kid around a lot and everything, but you have to be serious sometime, about something. If you're really good at something, I mean if there's nobody, or hardly anybody, who's as good as you are, then you've got to be serious about that. Don't mess around, for god's sake.' He frowned disapprovingly at me. 'Why didn't you say you had to study before? Don't move from that desk. It's going to be all A's for you.'
>
> 'Wait a minute,' I said, without any reason.
>
> 'It's okay. I'll oversee old Leper. I know he's not going to do it.' He was at the door.
>
> 'Wait a minute,' I said more sharply. 'Wait just a minute. I'm coming.'
>
> 'No you aren't, pal, you're studying.'
>
> 'Never mind my studying.'
>
> 'You think you've done enough already?'
>
> 'Yes.' I let this drop curtly to bar him from telling me what to do about my work. He let it go at that, and went out the door ahead of me, whistling off key. (pp. 50-51)

Gene initiates this conversation, attempting to confirm his suspicions that Finny is out to wreck his studies and, thus, to keep him from being his "best" and Finny's "equal." Rather, Gene finds that Finny is surprised that Gene needs to study. Although, at this point, Gene should clear Finny of any malicious motive, Gene interprets Finny's telling him to stay and study as another attempt to control him. Such interactions are not uncommon when one person suspects another of some wrong-doing, confronts that person, has the issue clarified, and then interprets something else as confirmation of the earlier suspicion.

The substance of this interaction creates a strong sense of reality—not only in terms of shifting reasons for being suspicious but also the idealistic explanation of why people are effortlessly good at what they do. The conversations between Gene and Finny, coupled with the exposition of feelings Gene usually supplies during these conversations, promote a sense of reality—from Gene's initial intimidation by Finny, his growing hostility toward Finny, and then justifying, out of guilt, his acts (training for the Olympics) after Finny's fall as helping Finny live the part of his life that he, Gene, has denied Finny.

Structure of the Novel

Like style, the structure of *A Separate Peace* ranked high, with a response mean for the four structure-related criteria of 3.44. Structure is based on the following three criteria:

1. The novel demonstrates mature techniques of narrative through the use of parallelism, introspection, stream of consciousness, etc. (3.43)
2. The plot has unique aspects; it avoids such characteristics of trash novels as excessive coincidence and 'baited hook' chapter endings. (3.5)
3. The plot manifests psychological, if not literal truth. (3.39)

The novel demonstrates mature techniques of narrative through the use of parallelism, introspection, stream of consciousness, etc. One of the unique features of *A Separate Peace* is the use of parallel symbols for war and peace. For example, the Lower Middlers (juniors in public school terms) symbolize peace, whereas the Upper Middlers (seniors) symbolize war. "We [Lower Middlers] were in shaky transit that summer from the groveling status of Lower Middlers to the near-respectability of Upper Middlers. The class above, seniors, draft-bait, practically soldiers, rushed ahead of us toward the war. They were caught up in accelerated courses and first-aid programs and a physical hardening regimen, which included jumping from this tree. We were still calmly, numbly reading Virgil and playing tag in the river farther downstream." (p. 7).

Student-rank dictated not only what students were doing in relation to the war, but also the faculty's attitude toward these particular groups of students.

> But there was another reason [the faculty loosened its grip of discipline on the Lower Middlers]. I think we reminded them of what peace was like, we boys of sixteen. We were registered with no draft board, we had taken no physical examinations. No one had ever tested us for hernia or color blindness. Trick knees and punctured eardrums were minor complaints and not yet disabilities which would separate a few from the fate of the rest. We were careless and wild, and I suppose we could be thought of as a sign of the life the war was being fought to preserve. Anyway, they were more indulgent toward us than at any other time; they snapped at the heels of the seniors, driving and molding and arming them for war. They noticed our games tolerantly. We reminded them of what peace was like, of lives which were not bound up with destruction. (pp. 16-17)

As the novel progresses and the boys come closer to "draft age," they become more affected by the war. Fighting a mental war which centers on his imagined battle with Finny, Gene strikes out by jouncing the limb, resulting in Finny's falling and breaking his leg which ultimately leads to the "trial hearing" months later. Unable to face the evil in his best friend that becomes apparent during the "trial hearing," Finny runs out of the auditorium and falls down the steps. He later dies when his leg is reset. Gene explains his action by stating that, because Finny and he were competing to be the best (Gene, the best student; Finny, the best athlete), Finny engaged Gene in such activities as the beach trip (that took Gene

away from studying for a trigonometry test which he failed) and the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session meetings to keep Gene from his academics and, thus, from becoming the best student. To Gene, the competition to become the best was a war, and he had to eliminate the source that would prevent him from becoming his best. Other examples of the advent of the war were Leper's joining the military, the interruption of the Winter Carnival (one of the boys' few attempts in the winter to engage in a frivolous activity) by Leper's telegram, and Leper's insanity.

The final engulfment is near the end of the novel when the school that for years had been a peaceful place for learning and playing is "taken over" by the military:

> The Jeeps, troops, and sewing machines were now drawn up next to the Far Common quadrangle. There was some kind of consultation or ceremony under way on the steps of one of the buildings, Veazy Hall. The Headmaster and a few of the senior members of the faculty stood in a group before the door, and a number of Army Air Force officers stood in another group within easy speaking distance of them. Then the Headmaster advanced several steps and enlarged his gestures; he was apparently addressing the troops. Then an officer took his place and spoke longer and louder; we could hear his voice fairly well but not make out the words . . . The company fell out and began scattering through the Far Common. Dormitory windows began to fly open and olive drab blankets were hung over the sills by the dozens to air. (pp. 189-190)

Other examples of the peace-and-war, parallel symbols are the two rivers—the Devon and the Naguamsett—and summer and winter. The Devon River was the site of their games; the Naguamsett River was the site of the fight between Gene and Quackenbush. Gene describes the two extreme rivers:

> [The Naguamsett River] was ugly, saline, fringed with marsh, mud, and seaweed . . . . It was nothing like the fresh-water Devon above the dam where we'd had so much fun, all the summer. The Devon's course was determined by some familiar hills a little inland; it rose among highland farms and forests which we knew, passed at the end of its course through the school grounds, and then threw itself with little spectacle over a small waterfall beside the diving dam, and into the turbid Naguamsett. (p. 68)

Explained earlier, as time passes—essentially going from summer to winter—the boys become more affected by the war: their becoming Upper Middlers, being forced to give up the peacefully innocent games of the summer, and instead dealing with warlike events such as the fight between Gene and Quackenbush, Leper's insanity, and Finny's death.

Like the parallel plots in many of Shakespeare's plays, the parallel symbolism in *A Separate Peace* facilitates the understanding of the novel and of student understanding of the literary element. It provides an effective framework for discussing the novel.

Characterization in the Novel

Characterization also ranked high in *A Separate Peace*; the response mean for the eight characterization-related criteria was 3.31. Characterization is based on the following eight criteria:

1. Character is thoroughly rather than superficially delineated. It is developed in a variety of ways rather than merely established descriptively. (3.46)
2. Conversations of the adolescent characters represent the adolescent idiom. All characters' conversations 'ring true.' (3.04)
3. The main adolescent characters are adequately motivated in their behavior. (3.21)
4. They are made to live with the consequences of their decisions. (3.54)
5. They develop sequentially rather than spontaneously. (3.29)
6. They grow into an understanding of their capabilities and limitations. (3.25)
7. They are characterized rather than caricatured. (3.46)
8. They react realistically to the situations that confront them. (3.21)

The only character that undergoes a fairly drastic change is Gene. Finny remains idealistic, even in the end when he is forced to realize the evil in Gene. Rather than interact with Gene the way most people would with someone who has intentionally tried to injure them seriously, Finny helps Gene find reasons for excusing his actions:

> His face had been struggling to stay calm as he listened to me, but now he was crying but trying to control himself. 'It was just some kind of blind impulse you had in that tree there, you didn't know what you were doing. Was that it? . . . Something just seized you. It wasn't anything you really felt against me, it wasn't some kind of hate you've felt all along. It wasn't anything personal. (p. 183)

We don't have to look too closely to know that in fact Gene's hatred for Finny did exist and was on-going and that what motivated him to jounce the limb was not a blind impulse but something that he did feel against Finny. Despite the opportunities to face reality, Finny chooses to remain idealistic. Characters such as Finny (the idealistic, perfect athlete), Brinker (the politician, the school leader), and Leper (the loner who attempts to break out of his mold only to fail in basic training—the least treacherous aspect of the war—and have a mental breakdown) are caricatures. In fact, the criteria for characterization hold true for Gene only.

His character is thoroughly delineated, as is apparent when we trace the growing evil in him during the first part of the book and the obsessive guilt that controls him in the second half. Although we might easily question the soundness of Gene's motives, the development of the motives is adequately presented. And, Gene does live with the consequences of his decisions.

The novel, with the exception of the first part of Chapter One, is a flashback; the adult Gene has needed to return to Devon to purge himself of the guilt and fear that resulted from his actions: "Looking back across fifteen years, I could see with great clarity the fear I had lived in, which must mean that in the interval I had succeeded in a very important undertaking: I must have made my escape from it" (p. 2). There seems to be an early indication of this purging when Gene states: "Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, and not even death by violence . . . . Changed, I headed

back through the mud" (p. 6). In the opening pages, the adult Gene visits two sites: the stairs that Finny fell down and the tree that Finny fell from. This visit is almost as if the criminal has returned to the site of the crime—in Gene's case, to bring some closure to his impression of these two sites. The closure is for his guilt of what happened, not the fact that certain things happened there. That closure was established fifteen years earlier, as indicated by the final paragraph: "All of them, all except Phineas, constructed at infinite cost to themselves these Maginot Lines against this enemy they thought was across the frontier, this enemy who never attacked that way—if he ever attacked at all; if he was indeed the enemy" (p. 196). He seems to be stating that suspecting the existence of enemies was commonplace, but that such suspicions were unwarranted and only Finny did not have the suspicions.

Although only Gene meets the criteria for characterization and many of the others clearly violate many of them, Gene's character is excellently developed. This development is primarily a result of the use of the first person point of view as retold through Gene the adult, since the adult Gene can somewhat remove himself from the events and bring some objectivity to what occurred.

Themes of the Novel

Consistent with the other three categories of literary merit, *A Separate Peace* scored high in terms of themes of the novel, with a response mean of 3.31. Below are listed the four theme-related criteria:

1. The theme offers adolescents some important perspective upon the nature of human experience. (3.57)
2. The theme is created seriously and respectfully. (3.39)
3. The theme helps determine the structure of the novel yet does not dominate any single element. (3.25)
4. The theme deals with an important adolescent need or developmental task and reflects values appropriate to our heritage. (3.04)

The theme offers adolescents some important perspective upon the nature of human experience. Numerous themes permeate this novel, but perhaps the most important one is the awareness of the evils of envy or jealousy. Throughout the first half of the novel, we become very aware of the impending jealousy Gene feels toward Finny. Gene's initial appreciation of Finny for choosing him as his best friend somewhat quickly turns to suspicion. Because the novel is told in the first person—Gene's point of view—we are never sure if, in fact, Finny is intentionally trying to wreck Gene's studies. Some of the conversations between Finny and Gene seem to indicate otherwise. As explained earlier, Finny is surprised that Gene has to study; he feels that if people are good at something, that something comes without effort. Finny perhaps sincerely felt that Gene did not need to study and the beach trip and the Suicide Society meetings were not attempts to keep Gene from being his best.

Much of the negative feeling Gene has toward Finny is basically Gene's

own fault. Rather than stand up to Finny's obsession with doing whatever he wants to do and including Gene in such activities because Gene is his best friend, Gene instead goes along with Finny—not because he wants to, but rather because he doesn't have the nerve to let others, especially Finny, know that he isn't the type of person who would be Finny's best friend. One example of Gene's not being willing to sacrifice his other side's being exposed is the following:

> We began to meet every night to initiate [the others wanting to join the Suicide Society]. The Charter Members, he and I, had to open every meeting by jumping ourselves. This was the first of the many rules Finny created without notice during the summer. I hated it. I never got inured to the jumping. At every meeting the limb seemed higher, thinner, the deeper water harder to reach. Every time, when I got myself into position to jump, I felt a flash of disbelief that I was doing anything so perilous. But I always jumped. Otherwise I would have lost face with Phineas, and that would have been unthinkable. (pp. 25-26)

The evil that grows within Gene is not Finny's fault, but rather Gene's. There seems to be little support for a belief that Finny maliciously attempts to manipulate Gene at all. The suspicions lie within Gene and are nurtured within Gene through his false speculations of Finny's motives.

But, Gene's suspicion of Finny actually hides the real problem. Rather than try to have a friendship with Finny that is based in part on his own terms, he gives in to what he feels Finny's terms are. When he finally does confront Finny with his suspicions (right before they go out to oversee Leper's jumping, which actually precedes Finny's fall), he realizes that the friendship could have been based in part on his terms.

> I said nothing, my mind exploring the new dimensions of isolation around me. Any fear I had ever had of the tree was nothing beside this. It wasn't my neck, but my understanding which was menaced. He had never been jealous of me for a second. Now I knew that there never was and never could have been any rivalry between us. I was not of the same quality as he. (p. 51)

It's not clear to the reader why soon after he realizes this Gene jounces the limb, causing Finny to fall. Perhaps it was the effect of having been so suspicious of Finny for so long and then realizing how wrong he had been. The evil action, however, seems to be too severe for this realization of pervasive goodness in Finny.

But, the critical theme in this novel is the evolution of evil within a person and the never-ending effect of that evil. The suspicion that Gene has toward Finny was not only unfounded but extremely dangerous, in terms of both Finny's supposed motives for keeping him from studying and other motives for excelling athletically. Gene dismisses Finny's modesty about his breaking A. Hopkins Parker's swim record by claiming that "his accomplishment took root in my mind and grew rapidly in the darkness where I was forced to hide it" (p. 36) and "[I] did hate him for breaking the school swimming record" (p. 45). Finny's athletic accomplishments were commonplace and so not what Gene resented. Rather Gene resented Finny's modesty—as if Finny were trying to impress him that much more by dismissing a feat that, perhaps, no one else could have accomplished.

Because Gene's suspicions toward Finny are a means for dealing with his own insecurity, Gene imagines this battle with Finny and the need to win—or, the need to eliminate the enemy. Finny, except for the fact that he is his unique self, does not add fuel to this battle. But in the end, he is eliminated.

This theme easily serves as a mirror for people who allow envy to turn into jealousy and an intense evilness that may result in a severe injury to someone else.

Adult-adolescent Relationships in the Novel

Unlike its standing in the previous four categories, *A Separate Peace* scored low in terms of adult role or adult-adolescent relationships, with a response mean score of 2.57, approximately mid-way between poor and good. The response mean is based on the average of response scores of the four adult–adolescent-related criteria:

1. The adult characters reflect an accurate round of adult life—its responsibilities, satisfactions, and problems. (2.54)
2. Activities and characterizations of adults are representative rather than stereotyped. (2.43)
3. Relationships between adults and adolescents are sensitively drawn. The two age groups are presented as fellow members of a species, with common interests and problems. (2.46)
4. Adolescents' perceptions of adult life are consistent with their perceptions of other things. (2.86)

It is not surprising that *A Separate Peace* scored somewhat low when adult–adolescent relationships are considered. The focus of the novel is clearly a story of two teenagers coming of age at a New England prep school. The few adults in the novel are their teachers or headmasters. Because so much of the novel takes place in situations in which adults would not be reasonably present (the dorm room, the beach, the playing fields, etc.), there are few opportunities for the adolescents and adults to interact, except in very formal settings (the classroom, for example). Teachers and administrators are perceived as authority figures who are there to train their minds and control their misbehaviors. But quite honestly, the adolescents in the novel do not perceive the adults as reasonable people to help them solve their problems.

The opening tea party is perhaps the only time when both students and teachers are remotely honest with each other as people and let down their primary roles as students or teachers. Although Finny tries to maneuver mentally around the headmaster, his motive is quite clear, and the headmaster laughs with Finny, rather than reprimanding him. Knowles uses this particular incident as a technique to establish Finny's mystic power over people, rather than trying to establish some judgment about the headmaster and indirectly other adults.

Like some other novels that received high scores in the other categories such as *The Outsiders*, *A Separate Peace* does not allow for much adolescent/

adult interaction, although adults are present. Knowles could not do justice to the presentation of complete adult life since the adult characters were never outside the context of being faculty members and juggling the responsibilities required of them in that role. *The Outsiders* scored equally low on the adult-adolescent relationship criteria, with a category response mean score of 2.74 (versus 2.57 for *A Separate Peace*).

If we are to include the items of this category as part of the literary merit of adolescent novels, we need to realize that often the focus of adolescent novels is not how adolescents interact with adults—but how adolescents interact with one another. Although an adolescent novel of high literary merit may score somewhat low in this category, its high score on other categories will usually keep its total score high in relation to other novels. If a novel scores low on these items and adult/adolescent interactions are not germane to the intent of the literature study, then teachers probably should classify the novel as having greater literary merit than the novel's total score may indicate.

Final Comments

Selecting literature worth teaching is not as easy as some may think. The selection process should force teachers into considering two major factors: (1) student interest and (2) literary merit. *Literature to be taught* is often very different from what adolescents *choose for their own non-academic reading*. A colleague of mine feels that students should be given the opportunity to choose all of the literature they read as part of in-class literature study. I claim she is way too idealistic; she feels I must have had some very bad teaching experiences. My contention is that student leisure-reading can be very different from literature study, since the reasons for either differ greatly. As Emans and Patyk (1967) contend, adolescents have four major motives for reading: (1) informative; (2) identificational; (3) aesthetic; and, (4) recreational. Teachers, on the other hand, choose novels that help meet some of the course objectives for literary analysis. Clearly one solution is to merge the motives of the two audiences by selecting high interest novels that also have literary merit. To me *A Separate Peace* is such a novel.

Reference

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Merlin's Magic

Nancy Merrell

Adolescent literature is a valuable educational tool not only for students, but for teachers as well. It offers a wide range of topics and themes for discussion and provides an opportunity for readers to stretch their imaginations and experience a world they have not yet discovered.

There are many familiar ways that teachers use to approach the teaching of literature. However, while reading *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White, it struck me that Merlin was trying to present us with an important educational strategy to use when dealing with adolescent learners. He was a teacher, and this paper, therefore, focuses on the use of conceptual teaching as proposed by Merlin.

Merlin's Magic

Once upon a time, in a classroom far, far away, there was a teacher. She had encountered many adventurous tasks before, but now she was preparing to do battle. Her students were fierce opponents when it came to understanding and applying certain complex ideas, but this time, she knew that she would emerge victorious for she had learned from the master teacher, Merlin. While reading T. H. White's book entitled *The Once and Future King*, she saw the instructional model of conceptual teaching in action and knew that it was the magic that would change her pupils' learning.

But what exactly is conceptual learning? As a teacher, how can I apply this method to my classroom situation? In order for students to learn, they must be able to internalize an idea. A teacher can give them her interpretation of a concept; but, unless they are able to attach personal meaning to that idea, the possibility of their clearly understanding and applying that information in later life is unlikely. Instead, students must be able to draw their own network of inferences about the idea and categorize them in a way that makes the meaning of the concept clear. In this way, a mental image is created from which they can draw and to which they can add indefinitely. To attain this effect, a teacher becomes a guide. Concepts cannot be taught, and the instructor must allow students to develop their own personal images.

In *The Once and Future King*, Merlin is assigned the task of educating a very young and very inexperienced Arthur. Simple lectures are not enough in his education because, besides being not too clever, Arthur is destined to become King. He will be called upon to apply some very complex concepts in later life, and Merlin knows that it is necessary for him to help Arthur

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develop these ideas. Therefore, Merlin through his magic creates a situation in which Arthur experiences his lessons first hand.

This new way of learning at first frustrates Arthur. He has been used to learning concrete information, and he finds it difficult to begin thinking in the abstract. He wants immediate answers from Merlin, but his teacher knows that it is important for Arthur to stop trying to remember and to start trying to think.

To form a concept, an individual must have a series of experiences that are in one or more respects similar. Merlin feels that the best way for Arthur to learn the necessary lessons for his future job—such as political systems and administration—is through nature and the various systems set up in the animal kingdom. Merlin changes Arthur into a fish, a bird, an ant, and other animals, and Arthur listens to his various peers and learns. He joins them in their debates concerning justice, anarchy, socialism, and democracy, and experiences many situations in which his own knowledge is truly tested. After each excursion, he emerges with new information and a solid basis for a conceptual development.

Merlin allows Arthur to make mistakes because only through both positive and negative examples will an idea become well rounded. Merlin never interferes with the process of Arthur's self-education because he wants Arthur to invent his own theories. There is no grand discovery to be made, only invention, and soon Arthur realizes what it is to become a thinker. His concepts are never considered to be complete because, even as King, he adds to his definitions and changes what he has previously thought. His thinking becomes more abstract; and, when Merlin realizes that he has done all that he can do, he moves on.

Merlin knew that his priority as a teacher was to help his pupil learn how to think. He understood that feeding the students facts that can only be regurgitated is a waste of learning since those isolated facts are never really internalized and made a part of the individual. Students need to be able to make sense of information rather than become storage bins for it. Facts can change in a matter of years, even days, but concepts can be adjusted so that they remain relevant to life. For this reason, they are stable yet flexible.

Teachers, as well as students, would gain tremendously from using Merlin's method. By means of it, education becomes a non-ending procedure. Not every teacher has a classroom full of young Arthurs, and not every teacher will be grooming a future king. However, we are responsible for the product of our efforts. As Merlins, we can make more probable that what leaves our classrooms is a group of eager thinkers with the desire to learn and the capability of building their own Camelots.

A Critical Look at John Gardner's *Grendel*

Michael Segedy

A contemporary American novel that appears to be of growing popularity in high school English curriculum (currently an excerpt appears in Scott-Foresman's anthology *England in Literature*) is John Champlin Gardner's *Grendel*. It is an excellent novel to teach in conjunction with Albert Camus' *The Stranger* or Jean Paul Sarte's *Nausea* since it requires students to consider critically the world view generally set forth in existential literature before leaping to any romantic acceptance of it. In fact, *Grendel* (New York: Ballantine, 1971) is an attempt to counter the plethora of existential literature that has inundated the west and, in John Gardner's estimation, overstayed its welcome. Thus, Gardner has chosen his target effectively. *Grendel* is a satiric protest against Sartrean nihilism in contemporary literature and a declaration of the need of art to become, as in the past, model art, an art that holds the ugly, evil, and debased up to ridicule and praises the beautiful, good, and just, or asserts what William Faulkner called the "eternal verities." Gardner believes that Sartrean existentialism is a pathetically wicked creature that must be exorcised from contemporary fiction if literature is to be once again life-affirming.

In his book on literary criticism, *On Moral Fiction*, he tells us: "If we don't believe in eternal verities then we risk becoming Bluebeards . . . who reached, it seems, the existential decision that it's good to kill wives."[1] It is, he believes, the moral responsibility of the artist to assert values that will help sustain civilization, rather than bring on its moral decline. Real art should aim at creating myths that are healthy for society. If art is to be moral, Gardner tells us, it must be "life affirming" or "life giving." Art must be ". . . moral in its process of creation and moral in what it says. If people all over Europe killed themselves after reading Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, then either Goethe's book was fake art or its readers misunderstood."[2] Gardner declaims that most contemporary literature that promotes an existential world view is trivial at best and results only in celebrating ugliness and futility. Existential characters are drawn to staring at the black abyss and perceiving their world as amoral and meaningless. It is, therefore, the characters' prerogative arbitrarily to create their own values, since their world, devoid of any absolute meaning, is equally devoid of absolute values.

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Though Gardner asserts that real art must be moral, he does not wish to imply, he tells us, that real art need be didactic: "Didacticism and true art are immiscible; and in any case, nothing guarantees that didacticism will be moral. Think of *Mein Kampf*."[3] True art should instead raise moral questions that rouse ". . .trustworthy feelings about the better and worse in human action."[4] The problem with existential characters is that they operate in a world without morals where freedom of the will is the only absolute. When, for example, Grendel murders, he murders for the joy and freedom of it. There is no reason ulterior to this. Life and death are both meaningless. Grendel is not unlike Sartre's character, Mathieu, in *Nauseau*, who chooses to murder innocent Germans for the freedom of it:

> Thou shalt love thy neighbor as theyself—bang! In that bastard's face—Thou shalt not kill—bang! At that scarecrow opposite. He was firing on his fellowmen, on virtue, on the whole world. Liberty is terror . . . He looked at his watch . . . just time enough to fire at that smart officer, at all the beauty of the Earth, at the street, at the flowers, at the gardens, at everything he had loved . . . He fired; he was cleansed, he was all-powerful; he was free.[5]

It is this bizarre side of freedom that we see in Grendel, a side that does not call for didactic condemnation since his violent, senseless acts are to our inner sense of morality clearly debase.

In Grendel, we observe the workings of an anarchic mind predisposed to mayhem, a mind that arbitrarily creates its own sordid values. Violence becomes truth. Life is pointless. Both the examined and unexamined are not worth living. On the other hand, as a kind of moral foil we have the Shaper, that is, the scop, who proclaims his vision to the world. The Shaper professes a faith in man and the universe and strives to create meaning and purpose in life. As one critic has aptly put it, "The Shaper's visions shake Grendel to the roots. The Shaper connects the scattered parts of the world, gives them harmony, gives man a vision of goodness, an ideal of glory that Grendel struggles to reject."[6]

Throughout *Grendel*, Gardner implicitly poses the question: What kind of world would we have if there were no scops or shapers to make sense out of human existence and to fight back the forces of nihilism? In *On Moral Fiction* he tells us that the gods gave up the battle long ago and all that was left behind for our inheritance is Thor's hammer:

> It was said in the old days that every year Thor made a circle around middle-earth, beating back the enemies of order. Thor got older every year, and the circle occupied by gods and men grew smaller . . . All we have left is Thor's hammer, which represents not brute force but art, or counting both hammerheads, art and criticism.[7]

In Grendel it is the Shaper who has the hammer in hand to drive back the enemy of life—Sartrean existentialism represented in Grendel. The major role of art, as it is embodied in the Shaper, is to assert values that can deliver effective blows to the forces of nihilism. Most of our contemporary writers have left Thor's hammer in the field to be overgrown with weeds.

They have in effect become obsessed with staring at the black abyss: "The black abyss stirs a certain fascination, admittedly, or we would not pay so many artists so much money to keep staring at it . . . It seems to me time that artists start taking that fact as pretty thoroughly established."[3]

They have (to use the term that Sherwood Anderson applied to spiritually and morally misdirected characters) become grotesque in their insistence on this singular truth and have created great falsehoods about life. They have reduced life to one large *reductio ad absurdum*, turning those once important values of man into the trivial and pointless.

What we have in the Grendel monster then is a caricature of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophical beliefs espoused by an appropriately anti-heroic figure who is incessantly struggling to come to grips with reality – existentially, of course. *Grendel* begins with the monster discoursing on the mechanical nature of an old ram who like most beasts is unable to raise himself to the level of self-consciousness: "Do not think my brains are squeezed shut like the ram's, by the roots of horns. Flanks atremble, eyes like stones, he stares at as much of the world as he can see and feels it surging in him . . ." (p. 1). Grendel, of course, is not just aware of the world around him "surging in on him," but is conscious of the existential self. He has what Sartre has described as reflected consciousness, consciousness that is at once conscious of objects and self. The self becomes positional like other objects of consciousness; it becomes an object in its own field. This becoming requires a transcendence that the old ram is not capable of. Grendel continues by remarking on the accidental nature of reflected consciousness, an accident that, later on, we shall see, has created the condition for his freedom: "Not, of course, that I fool myself with thoughts that I'm more noble. Pointless, ridiculous monster crouched in the shadow. (I'm neither proud nor ashamed, understand. One more dull victim, leering at seasons that were never meant to be observed.) Ah, sad one, poor old freak!" (p. 2).

Later when Grendel is rescued by his mother, he comes to the same existential conclusions about consciousness: "What I see I inspire with usefulness, I think, trying to suck in breath, and all that I do not see is useless, void. I observe myself observing what I observe. It startles me. Then I am not that which I observe!" (p. 22). Grendel, views life existentially as separate and detached from his own being—he is not locked into it, but can reflect on it and observe himself observing it. Creatures, other than men, are not able to make these sorts of distinctions, and, therefore, are never truly in the position of the observer. (Of course, men with their reflected consciousness are only observing a reflection—a nothingness.) The lower animal forms are too close—mechanically and instinctually buried in reality. He tells us that these stupid creatures see all of life without observing it: "That is their happiness: they see all of life without observing it. They're buried in it like crabs in mud" (p. 3).

After Gardner offers us this insight into the mind of Grendel, he describes the monster's awareness of the meaninglessness and purposelessness of the universe: ". . . to be out in the night, naked to the cold mechanics of

the stars. Space hurls outward—falconswift, mounting like an irreversible justice, a final disease" (p. 3). Grendel also mocks the notion that God is in heaven and all is right with the world and that He even watches over the fallen sparrow: "A baby bird falls feet-up in my path, squeeking. With a crabby laugh, I let him lie, kind heaven's merciful bounty to some sick fox" (p. 4).

Grendel, face to face with existential dread, confronting the apparent fact there is not a heaven or God and that all the blackening night holds is the potential for death (being-unto-death), screams out in anguish for something to which he can attach himself, even if that something must be the icy chasm of death itself. But he is no fanatical Kierkegaard who will blindly take the leap into faith: "At the same time I am secretly fooled. The uproar is only my own shriek, and chasms are, like all things vast, inanimate. They will not snatch me in a thousand years, unless, in a lunatic fit of religion, I jump" (p. 5).

Later Grendel gets caught between two tree trunks and is surrounded by some fierce pattern-making Danes who are set on destroying him. As he faces death, he undergoes existential angst:

> I understood that the world was nothing; a mechanical chaos of casual, brute entity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears. I understood that, finally and absolutely, I alone exist. All the rest, I saw, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against, blindly—as blindly as all that is not myself pushes back. I create the whole universe, blink by blink—an ugly god pitifully dying in a tree. (p. 16)

While he is trapped, he also experiences a psychotic detachment very much like Sartre's Roquetin in *Nausea*. Compare the two passages, the first from *Grendel*:

> Thing after thing tried, cynical and cruel, to foist itself off as my mama's shape—a black rock balanced at the edge of the cliff, a dead tree casting a long-armed shadow, a running stag, a cave entrance—each thing trying to detach itself, lift itself out of the general meaningless scramble of objects, but falling back, melting to the blank, infuriating clutter of not my mother . . . My heart began to race. I seemed to see the whole universe, even, the sun and sky, leaping forward, then sinking away again, decomposing. Everything was wreckage, putrefaction. If she were there, the cliffs, the brightening sky, the trees, the stag, the waterfall, would suddenly snap into position around her, sane again, well-organized; but she was not, and the morning was crazy. (p. 14)

From *Nausea*:

> Bluish objects pass the windows, blue this great yellow brick house advancing uncertainly, trembling, suddenly stopping and taking a nose dive . . . It starts up again, it leaps against the windows . . . It rises, crushing . . . It slides along the car brushing it . . . Suddenly it is no longer there, it has stayed behind . . . I lean my hand on the seat but pull it back hurriedly: it exists. This thing I'm sitting on, leaning my hand on, is called a seat. They make it purposely for people to sit on; they took leather, springs and cloth, they went to work with the idea of making a seat and when they finished, that was what they had made . . . I murmur "It's a seat," a little like an exorcism. But the word stays on my lips: it refuses to go and put itself on the thing. It stays what it is, with its red plush, thousands of little paws in the air, all still little dead paws. This enormous belly turned upward,

> bleeding inflated . . . is not a seat. It could just as well be a dead donkey . . . It seems ridiculous to call them seats or to say anything at all about them. I am in the midst of things, nameless things. Alone without words, defenseless, they surround me, are beneath me, behind, above me. They demand nothing, they don't impose themselves: They are there.[9]

Both Roquetin and Grendel, in the above passages, are experiencing a disorderliness and detachment of sense data from their familiar references. Reality to Grendel is interpreted in reference to his mother. Without his mother present as a referential object, the data of experience became chaotic and devoid of meaning just as the word "seat" was responsible for unifying and ordering the various sense data commonly associated with it. What both come to realize is that reality is highly interpretive, because reality, phenomenologically speaking, is merely the ordering of consciousness-of. Roquetin and Grendel have experienced a ". . . disgusting overabundance of existence plus, that transparent nothingness we call consciousness that separates us from this overabundance. That is all."[10] Words such as mama or seat are only devices that protect us from seeing the world as it is. Grendel and Roquetin's glimpse was one into the world as it really is, divorced from words. Words of course are inadequate for describing reality as it is: ". . . if we have to use any word at all, the best one is 'absurd.' "[11] The Grendel monster undergoes existential dread where everything is seen as loose and separate from everything else and there is no apparent reason for it being thus. It simply is. This notion is one that Gardner seems to reject. He would rather embrace the Whiteheadean view of reality that would argue for some sort of rationale behind appearances, even if the rationale was not posited in a belief in absolutes.

For example, in *On Moral Fiction*, Gardner refers to lasting values as "relative absolutes." He feels that he, therefore, escapes asserting the need for values that exist a priori: "The Good, the True, the Beautiful are not as everyone knows, things that exist in the way llamas do, but values which exist when embodied . . . They are values by definition, and by inspection, not relative values, but relative absolute values, like health."[12] In *Grendel*, it is the Shaper who is the primary progenitor of these relative absolutes, and it is Grendel who is completely stunned by the power of the Shaper to turn a reality of seeming brute existence into a world of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness:

> "What was he? The man had changed the world, had torn up the past by its thick gnarled roots and had transmuted it . . . He reshapes the world," I whispered belligerently. "So his name implies. He stares strange-eyed at the mindless world and turns dry stick to gold . . . He takes what he finds," I said stubbornly trying again. "And by changing men's minds he makes the best of it." (p. 41)

Grendel, in only insisting on the truth of his nihilism, sees the Shaper as a ridiculous wretch who distorts the truth in order to fabricate fantastic lies about his race. Gardner's Grendel perceives the workings of the universe as mindlessly in motion and the absurd role of man as truth or order seeker in a world devoid of absolutes—such as God.

Grendel adamantly denies not only the truth of the Shaper's visions but that they can redeem themselves by the sole weight of their esthetic nature. He remains the caustic skeptic: "It was a cold-blooded lie that a god had lovingly made the world and set out the sun and the moon as lights to land-dwellers, that brothers had fought, that one of the races was saved, the other cursed. Yet he the old Shaper might make it true by the sweetness of his harp, his cunning trickery" (p. 47).

Grendel is not, however, the only mouthpiece in the novel for Gardner's assault on what he sees as existential decadence. Later in the book we meet Hrothulf's (the King's nephew) pundit, an ardent follower of the great father of existential nihilism—Nietzche. This old iconoclast named Red Horse (many of his ideas are also Marxian) worships violence and power for the intrinsic value he finds in them. He is shown preaching his philosophy to the young hot-blooded Hrothulf. His speech sounds as though it were lifted from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*:

> "The incitement to violence depends upon the total transvaluation of the ordinary values. By a single stroke, the most criminal acts must be converted to heroic and meritorious deeds . . . The total ruin of institutions and morals is an act of creation. A religious act. Murder and Mayhem are the life and soul of revolution." (p. 102)

Gardner emphasizes the relativistic strain in the speech of Red Horse, where values or the creation of them are nothing less than a pure act of will. Anything that restrains the impulse to freedom (such as traditional institutions and morals) stands as a direct threat to man's expression of will and power. Red Horse, like Grendel, embraces wholeheartedly power for power's sake. In a world defined by characters such as Red Horse and Grendel, where absolute values are passé, what could be more important to the individual than power itself? The issue is not whether the end justifies the means (the only end is power and freedom of the will); the issue must always be how to obtain unlimited power and unrestricted freedom: "Revolution my dear prince, is not the substitution of immoral for moral, or illegitimate for legitimate violence. It is simply the pitting of power against power where the issue is freedom for the winners and enslavement of the rest" (p. 104).

Grendel sees the Shaper's visions as insubstantial as the air, and he establishes freedom and power as the only truth. Grendel recognizes the dark impulse for power that pervades all things: "The world resists me and I the world . . . That's all there is. The mountains are what I define them as" (p. 22). Grendel, enthralled by his discovery of power as the absolute reality, in an apocalyptic vision realizes that power is the ground of being: "I was Grendel, Ruiner of Meadhalls, Wrecker of Kings" (p. 69).

Red Horse is also married to the idea of power as the one absolute and is therefore opposed to governments which, by their very nature, usurp the individual's rightful freedom. He displays the fanticism of an inveterate anarchist in his admonishment of Hrothulf: "All systems are evil. All

governments are evil . . . If you want me to help destroy a government, I'm here to serve" (p. 104).

Red Horse and Grendel are not believers in a priori absolutes but are stark realists whose thought remains very much this side of mysticism and religion. They are not dreamers and shapers like the scop who believes in and insists on Platonic truths or eternal verities. In fact, Grendel's first discoveries when very young were far from Platonic, and Gardner cleverly reveals Gendel's antirationalist predisposition in an early scene where Grendel first discovers how to escape from the cave. In Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" the seeker of truth ascends from the illusory darkness to the realm of light and truth. Grendel's escape, on the other hand, is not an ascension to truth, for he finds above ground only another larger land of darkness:

> I nosed out in my childish games, every last shark-toothed chamber and hall, every black tentacle of my mother's cave, and so came at last, adventure by adventure, to the pool of firesnakes . . . And so I discovered the sunken door, and so came up, for the first time to the moonlight. I went no farther, that first night. But I came out again inevitably. I played my way further out into the world, vast cavern aboveground, cautiously darting from tree to tree challenging the terrible forces of night on tiptoes. At dawn I fled back. (p. 12)

Here Plato's sun which represented the Good is replaced by the moon or moonlight. There is no spiritual or intellectual illumination to be discovered in this vast cavern aboveground. Instead of experiencing a heightened understanding of reality, Grendel engages in a game of hide and seek with the forces of darkness. Grendel's return to the cave is not missionary, but rather is a retreat into a more dismal realm of reality—for there are no truths out there to be discovered.

Finally we get to the Dragon and his role in *Grendel*. It is his ubiquitous stench which pervades Grendel's thoughts, especially after their first meeting. He possesses a total vision of history, past and future, and views man's system building as an exercise in metaphysical futility and ignorance. He scoffs at man's pretentiousness: "They only think they think. No total vision, total system, merely schemes with a vague family resemblance, no more identity than bridges and, say spiderwebs" (p. 53).

Grendel first goes to the Dragon looking for answers about the Shaper and God. He has been momentarily romanced by the Shaper's visions and would like to believe that there is more to reality than brute existence. The Dragon, of course, is an unwaivering cynic who mockingly laughs at what Grendel tells him the Shaper has said about God: "He said the Greatest of Gods made the world, every wonderbright plain and the turning seas. He said . . ." (p. 63).

"Ridiculous. What God? Where? Life force, you mean? The principle of process? God as the history of Chance?" (p. 63).

Grendel is somewhat persistent and replies: "Nevertheless, something will come of all this . . ." (p. 63).

The Dragon, sounding very much like Shakespeare's Iago, admonishes

Grendel to forget about the vision of the Shaper and to put money in his purse: "Nothing, he said. A brief pulsation in the black hole eternity. My advice to you—My advice to you, my violent friend, is to seek out gold and sit on it" (p. 63).

The Dragon also reveals to Grendel how mankind will accidently bring about his own ultimate destruction: "Nothing stirring, not even an ant, a spider, a silent universe. Such is the end of the flicker of time the brief, hot fuse of events and ideas set off, accidentally, and snuffed out, accidentally by man" (p. 61). Although the Dragon can foresee the end of the cosmos, he explains that his knowing has no causal relationship to that final cataclysm.

> We see in an instant the passionate vision and the blowout. Not that we cause things to fail, you understand . . . If you with your knowledge of present and past recall that a certain man slipped on say, a banana peel, or fell off his chair, or drowned in river, that recollection does not mean you caused him to slip, or fall, or drown. (p. 54)

The Dragon and Grendel's philosophical views are not really different in kind; they are different in degree. The Dragon is more total and comprehensive in his nihilism and of course makes the perfect guru for Grendel. The Dragon tells Grendel that he does after all have a purpose in this world and a certain status to maintain: He makes men think and scheme, driving them to the abyss to contemplate in its bottomless depths their own mortality. Grendel, unfortunately, swallows the bait—hook, line, and sinker. He begins to thrive on his own horrid myth, and in the end it is his myth about the world and himself that destroys him. He has driven men to poetry, science, religion, and art without understanding the heavy cost. The Dragon uncovers all to him when it is already too late.

If we understand what the Dragon represents, then we can begin to understand why the Dragon and Beowulf are fused into one character at the end of the book. The reason is symbolic. It is not Beowulf who defeats Grendel in Gardner's version; it is Grendel who defeats Grendel, or more precisely, it is Grendel's existential nihilism that destroys him. If, for example, Grendel is ultimately responsible for the choices in life he makes and his existence does ontologically precede his essence, then the world he lives in, the myth he becomes, is what he has fashioned for himself and for mankind. He must be responsible for his own demise, and it can only be pathetically ironic when this poor lost soul blames his fate on mere accidents. Every choice is a free one. And who could best rub his nose in his own nihilism while laughing like a lunatic? Who could create the ultimate nihilistic gesture? No other than Grendel's guru, the dragon. Grendel tells the dragon in their fatal encounter: "If you win it's by mindless chance. Make no mistake. First you tricked me, and then I slipped. Accident" (p. 150). The dragon replies: "Grendel, Grendel! You make the world by whispers, second by second. Are you blind to that? Whether you make it a grave or a garden of roses is not the point" (p. 150). Thus Grendel goes to his grave, a confused but stubborn nihilist, only at best half

understanding the dire implications of his nihilism. Of course, nothing could be more appropriate than a nihilist defeated by his own nihilism and the victor, Beowulf, representing all that Grendel's philosophy of negation is opposed to: the perpetuation of culture and civilization.

Notes

[1]John Camplin Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978, p. 24.

[2]*Moral Fiction*, p. 15.

[3]*Moral Fiction*, p. 19.

[4]*Moral Fiction*, p. 19.

[5]W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy: Kant to Wilgenstein and Sartre*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1969, p. 428.

[6]Victor Howes, "Notes from the Underground," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 Sept. 1971, p. 13.

[7]*Moral Fiction*, p. 3.

[8]*Moral Fiction*, p. 126.

[9]Jones, *A History*, pp. 420-1.

[10]Jones, *A History*, p. 423.

[11]Jones, *A History*, pp. 422-3.

[12]*Moral Fiction*, p. 133.

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Fahrenheit 451: Three Reasons Why It's Worth Teaching

Wade E. Reynolds

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* can be an intriguing book for both students and teachers to study. Its strengths lie in three areas. Stylistically, it offers excellent examples of simile and metaphor. The themes of the book are relevant to our times and can be shown to affect students in their day to day lives. Possibly most important, the novel can be a valuable introduction to the genre of science fiction for the uninitiated.

Ray Bradbury writes with an abundance of simile and metaphor. *Fahrenheit 451* can be an excellent introduction to these for middle school students or a good review for high school students. In the beginning some students may have to read more slowly, and the teacher should take time to point out what Bradbury is doing. One particularly difficult passage comes near the beginning of the book, when Montag, the protagonist, comes home to discover his wife's attempted suicide. Reading this section aloud in class and pointing out the many similes and metaphors in this three-page section will alert students to Bradbury's style. The length of the novel (less than 200 pages) is good in that students will not find it impossibly long, yet it is long enough to reinforce an impression of simile and metaphor. As students become familiar with Bradbury's style, they will learn to recognize and appreciate simile and metaphor from a practical method, reading, rather than through meaningless drills.

It is interesting to note that, although *Fahrenheit 451* was first published in 1953,[1] Ray Bradbury has accurately predicted inventions and social trends that we take for granted in the 1980's. Some examples from the novel are miniature ear radio receivers (today's walkman radios), talking parlor walls (wide-screen television), and a turning away from the printed media in favor of audiovisual media. In the early 1950's, television had only recently been made available to the consumer and watching TV was not yet a regular part of American life. *Fahrenheit 451* is an example of yesterday's science fiction becoming today's fact, and it is this accuracy of prediction that establishes the credibility of Bradbury's themes.

A quick look at the themes also reveals they are not just irrelevant philosophic ideas for students to ponder only during English class but rather vital issues of our times. The question of censorship is always with us. Students will have plenty to say in a discussion of who gets to decide what material is to be censored.

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It is ironic that in various printings over the years *Fahrenheit 451* itself has been subjected to censorship in more than 70 separate sections.[2] (For an uncensored text, see the Del Rey paperback published by Ballantine Books. Warning: This edition has many recurrences of the words "hell" and "damn." This edition also includes an afterword by the author on the subject of censorship.)

More specific to the content of the novel, Beatty, the fire chief, explains to Montag how the censorship came about. "It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick."[3] Beatty goes on to explain how reading may give some individuals an advantage over others; how technology watered down classic novels to quick 15-minute blurbs on TV; and how the minorities, each by eliminating passages offensive to a small, specific group, watered down the substance of all serious literature until it became a meaningless mass of homogeneous pulp. What's scary is that we can see this happening around us today. Classic novels are constantly being tapered to fit a 90-minute movie frame or a two-hour (minus time for commercials) TV slot. *Fahrenheit 451* serves as a warning as to where censorship may ultimately lead.

Closely related to censorship is the theme of an entire society of non-readers and non-thinkers. Montag and Beatty live in a society where everyone wants to be, and claims to be, happy. They are virtually unbothered by the printed word, never have to consider more than one side of any "issue," and are fed a constant supply of entertainment through their parlor walls and other public devices. The results are people who have forgotten how to think for themselves. They have little of substance to say to each other, no real sense of family, and small regard for the value of human life. Ironically, in a society dedicated to pursuing happiness, the suicide rate is up; and a vague, nagging sadness hangs over many of its members. It, however, never occurs to any of them to think they might be unhappy.

One might reasonably claim we are currently heading in the direction Bradbury foresaw. In a recent informal survey, a fellow teacher discovered that over half the students in his three sixth-grade classes spend nine or more hours a day watching television on weekends. While the long-term effects of this amount of television watching cannot be predicted, it is a strong indication that we have already taken several large strides toward becoming the society Bradbury warned of in 1953.

Prediction and warning are the basis of *Fahrenheit 451*'s value as an introduction to science fiction. It is possible that science fiction, long a misunderstood and underrated genre by students and teachers, may be the most vital and relevant literature of our time. It is important to remember that, although many science fiction stories are set in the future, they do not attempt to predict the future. Rather, they warn us of possible futures by projecting possible future trends. It is up to us, through reading these possibilities, to heed the warnings and prevent their actualization. If this sounds far-fetched, take a look around. Try convincing the sixth graders

who watch nine-plus hours of TV a day that they should spend at least as much time reading as they do watching TV.

For many students today, science fiction is the special effects-laden escapism of movies such as the *Star Wars* series or *Dune* (a prime example of a book being stripped of much of its substance in order to fit the time requirements of a movie feature). Students have been exposed to little else, with the exception of "Star Trek" reruns on TV. Incidentally, it was an eighth grade student who explained to me why that series had been taken off the air. "They don't have any car chases or good-looking guys," she told me in all sincerity. And they say teaching isn't a learning experience! When asked to define science fiction, most of my eighth graders were unable to do so. At best they came up with vague generalities. They were unable to discern science fiction from fantasy, or why it mattered in the long run.

Unfortunate as this is, it is more unfortunate that many English teachers share their students' lack of respect for science fiction, but for different reasons. They dismiss it as childish, irrelevant escapism. While it is true that the simplistic stories of invaders from outer space that come immediately to mind at the mention of science fiction do fit this description, it is also true that there is much more to science fiction. Many teachers are basing their opinions on literature that was written in the 1930's, 40's, and 50's. With notable exceptions, these stories are out of date and not considered to be quality science fiction.

Issac Asimov, a popular science fiction writer *and* a popular writer on a wide variety of other subjects, has categorized three types of science fiction. Gadget science fiction emphasizes new inventions and how they work. Adventure science fiction is the basic, escapist adventure story with a science fiction setting. Social science fiction deals with the social effects on individuals and societies of new inventions, trends, and discoveries.[4] *Fahrenheit 451* is an example of social science fiction, and it is relevant because it deals with issues which our society is, and could be, confronted with.

Asimov has also made another observation: "Through almost all of man's history there was never any visible change in the basic manner of life as far as the individual human being was concerned . . . there seemed nothing about the future that could not be dealt with in terms of the present."[5] This, of course, is no longer true today. As our technology and scientific knowledge increase at incredible rates, the rate of change in our lives escalates dramatically. According to Alan E. Nourse, "The appropriate question is how change can be dealt with in such a way that individuals and society can survive and prosper in the midst of it . . . Science fiction today is an excellent means for pinpointing and identifying the potential hazards that may face us in the future because of accelerating change; in addition, it is also an excellent means for testing or exploring possible future solutions . . . science fiction is a *literature of ideas*."[6]

What better way to introduce students to a literature of ideas than through

a novel whose theme warns of a society whose members have no ideas of their own and who are unable to think for themselves? The irony seems only just. After all, in today's ever-more-rapidly-changing society, it may be more true than ever before: you're either part of the solution or part of the problem.

Teaching Suggestions for *Fahrenheit 451*

***Bradbury's short story "A Sound of Thunder" can be used as a way of introducing Bradbury's style. This story of hunters from the future travelling back in time to kill a *Tyrannosaurus rex* will hold students' attention, and can be read in less than a period with time left for discussion. A single paragraph from this story, in which Bradbury describes the dinosaur, contains several good examples of simile and metaphor. The story should put students in a positive frame of mind for the novel, and they will have a good introduction to simile and metaphor.

***"Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is an excellent short story to read in order to compare themes. Set in a future society that has passed laws to insure that all citizens will be equal, this amusing story can also be read within a period. A good place to use this story is after students have read part two of the novel (*Fahrenheit 451* is divided into three sections). " 'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman" by Harlan Ellison and "The Machine Stops" by E. M. Forster are other stories for older, more sophisticated students.

***As a final project for this unit, I have devised a lesson which combines persuasive speaking, one of the book's themes, and a touch of drama to break monotony. Three weeks before the due date, I post a sign or two in conspicuous places about school. The signs read "GIVE UP is coming. Watch for further details." Two weeks before the due date my students are each issued the following summons.

GIVE UP

"We're Protecting You"

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Government Investigator of Vile and Erroneous Undesirable Propaganda (GIVE UP) session of this court to be held 4th period, Friday, May 16, 1986, in the Carver Library. Due to objections by various groups, all books found undesirable are scheduled to be burned. Our agents have informed us that you have a favorite book, one which you believe should be spared from burning. In the interest of being fair, you may speak for one to two minutes in your book's defense. Come prepared to give your best argument. Penalties will be stiff. Books that are not successfully defended will be burned, along with their defenders. Register the book to be defended at your local GIVE UP Office (Room 109) by Wednesday, May 14, 1986. Failure to register on time or to comply with this summons will result in more severe penalties.

On the following day I post signs in my room and on the door proclaiming "GIVE UP Local 109. We're Protecting You." At some time in the next two weeks we review speaking and persuasion techniques. Students are given a check sheet so they can see how they will be graded. My students get two separate grades, one for speaking technique and one for content.

On the day of the trial, students report directly to the library, which has been turned into a courtroom. A panel of three jurors (volunteer teachers) sits in the back, students in the gallery. A long desk with one chair and the GIVE UP sign is in front of the room.

I wait until all students and jurors have been seated before I make my entrance. My bailiff cries "All rise," and I stride into the room. The Darth Vader mask and black robe are usually quite effective. I declare the court open by reading from the scroll in my hand, and then students are called to the stand in a prearranged order. The only time taken between defenses is for the judge and jurors to complete any comments on their grade sheets. Students' grades are the average of the four (three jurors and myself) scores. Students enjoy this activity, and I have used it in place of a final test on the book. We haven't had to burn a student yet.

Notes

[1]First published as a novel in 1953. A shorter version appeared in *Galaxy Science Fiction* under the title "The Fireman." Copyright 1950 by World Editions, Inc.

[2]Ray Bradbury, "Author's Afterword," in *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1984, p. 182.

[3]Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1984, p. 61.

[4]Issac Asimov, "Social Science Fiction," in Reginald Bretor, ed., *Modern Science Fiction*, as quoted in Dick Allen, ed., *Science Fiction: The Future*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971, pp. 271-273.

[5]Issac Asimov, "Science Fiction and Society," *Prism* January, 1974, as quoted in Jack Williamson, ed., *Teaching Science Fiction: Education for Tomorrow*, Philadelphia: Owlswick Press 1980, p. 26.

[6]Alan E. Nourse,"Science Fiction and Man's Adaptation to Change," in Reginald Bretnor, ed., *Science Fiction Today and Tomorrow*, as quoted in *The Conscious Reader*, ed. by Caroline Shrodes, Harry Finestone, and Michael Shugrue. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1978, pp. 644-645.

Benedict Kiely and the Irish Gelignite Tradition

Edwin C. Epps

Benedict Kiely's most recent novel, *Nothing Happens in Carmincross* (London: Victor Gollancz; Boston: David R. Godine, 1985), deals with the current troubles in Northern Ireland in so compassionate and so passionate a way that it should be required reading for all students who read in the English language and who care about humanity. Ostensibly the story of an expatriate Irishman's return home for the wedding of a favorite niece and his horror at her senseless murder in the name of partisan necessity, the novel is, in fact, not only an examination of the long history of Irish despair but also an indictment of cruel and stupid human behavior at all times and in all places. Moreover, it is the work of a master stylist of the language who deserves closer attention in American schools and universities than he has so far received.

Kiely is known in his native land as a short story writer, a novelist, a journalist, a radio personality, and one of the most gifted of conversationalists in a land of conversationalists. He has published eight novels, four collections of short stories, and a half dozen works of nonfiction, including a guide to Dublin and *Ireland from the Air*, the ultimate tourist book about the Emerald Isle (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985). He received the Irish Academy of Letters Award for Literature in 1980. In this country his work appeared with some regularly for a number of years in *The New Yorker*, and in the sixties he was an instructor and resident writer at a number of American colleges and universities, including Emory University, where I first encountered the man and his work as one of his students.

Actually *Carmincross* is Kiely's second work about the sectarian fighting in the northern part of his native land. An earlier novella, *Proxopera* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1977), deals with the anguished but heroic decision made by a retired teacher whose family is taken hostage by a gang of toughs, who order him to "deliver" a bomb-laden dairy truck into the square of his home village. Fearing for the safety of his family but also driven by the demands of a higher morality, the teacher drives not into the heart of the village but away into the surrounding countryside. He pays a price for his defiance—his kneecaps are shattered by bullets—

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but he has asserted the essential decency of mankind against the madness of those who would spew evil randomly throughout the world for little reason besides bloodlust.

There is little of this sense of decency triumphant in *Nothing Happens in Carmincross*. There are good people in this novel, to be sure, but they tend to be victims or helpless bystanders in a world gone mad. From the opening pages of the book, the reader knows that he is not in for a light read. Mervyn Kavanagh, the uncle travelling home for a joyous family occasion, sits next to a countryman whose lap is concealed by a blanket until it is dislodged by Kavanagh's attempts to rid himself of his seat belt. As the blanket falls askew, Kavanagh notices that the man has no legs. As he quickly also learns, neither does his fellow traveller have a bladder; he must constantly use a specimen bottle, and he must do so at his seat. "It was a rail accident, both legs destroyed, the bladder too," his companion explains to him (p. 9). The pitiable condition of this man becomes a metaphor for all of the suffering that is to follow in the novel: random violence committed against decent people and scarring them physically and mentally while depriving them of some part of their basic humanity. It is to Mervyn Kavanagh's eternal credit that out of fellow-feeling he offers to empty the man's bottles every twenty minutes so that both the man and the stewardesses will be spared too much embarrassment.

As the plane approaches Shannon Airport, Kavanagh drifts in and out of dreams, senses clouded by the tedium of travel and a goodly number of brandies. He dimly remembers his first trip across the Atlantic—in the *other* direction—forty years earlier; he recalls snatches of Irish folksongs; his mind wanders to the Easter Rising of 1916, to earlier conflicts against the Black and Tans; he talks with his neighbor of Charles Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic. They land, and his neighbor leaves with family who have come to meet him—they are dressed in black. The first news he hears after landing is that one of the IRA imprisoned by the British at Long Kesh has escaped and arrived home just in time to be married to a local beauty queen amid cries of "Up the Provisional I.R.A." (p. 18).

What is going on in these opening scenes is that Kiely is establishing a pattern that will recur throughout the novel: the present merges with the past; contemporary violence is foreshadowed in events of the past; the seeming normalcy of the moment gives way to jarring incongruities; the real becomes the dream; one country becomes another. What Kiely is doing, to borrow a word from Matthew Arnold, is *imaging* a view of the world. As he sees it, the world is a place of haphazard violence and confusion; thus, structurally, his novel exemplifies this world by proceeding not linearly but associationally. An event prompts a memory which turns out to be an example of human folly, which in turn reminds the protagonist of somebody else, who becomes an actor on the stage of history, which is memorialized in a folksong, which is interrupted by a voice from the real world of the present moment, etc. The technique is at once extremely

complicated and very clever indeed, and Kiely brings it off wonderfully well.

Kiely's theme in the novel is the pervasiveness and enduring nature of human stupidity, evil, and violence. He writes early on, "In Ireland there's precedent for everything. Except common sense" (p. 72). At another point a young priest "Tells Merlin that the cardinal in Armagh, a great churchman, has condemned contraception because it strikes at the special quality of Irish life. Merlin wonders about the special quality of Irish life" (p. 83). The implication here and elsewhere is that there is little worth preserving in Irish life as it is currently being lived in the North. Kavanagh calls himself Merlin and is called Merlin by his old friend and sometime lover Deborah in ironic counterpoint to the stark reality of the dark deeds that surround them: Merlin was a magician, a wizard who could see into the future and the past and do tricks of a sort, but he could not influence the course of events. Neither can Mervyn Kavanagh: his mind freely ranges over the past, the present, and the future, now calling up Martin Luther and King Herod, now remembering Dean Swift in St. Patrick's Cathedral, again throwing a Kermit the Frog-like stuffed toy metaphorically up against a sixteen-year-old West Belfast youth lying in a pool of his own blood, here retelling the great legends of Gaelic folklore, there drawing an analogy between the Koran, contemporary events in Iran, and the divided consciousness of Belfast. But in no instance can he change events.

This sense of futility is underscored throughout *Nothing Happen in Carmincross* by recurrent symbols of often ironic circularity and of journeys outward and back. Patterns repeat without regard for the lives caught up within them. For example, the unnamed legless man in the airplane at the beginning of the novel is the precursor of many other cripples we meet in this novel. Similarly, the happy marriage that Kavanagh anticipates celebrating in Carmincross serves as a foil against which the unhappy marriage of his friend Deborah can be played. Ironically, though, his niece's wedding is thwarted by her death, and at the end of the novel Deborah in fact returns to her husband. Kavanagh himself flees an unsympatico ladyfriend in America to return to his homeland at the commencement of the story; at its end, however, he flees the violence of the land he knows best to return to "Thomas Wolfe's golden city" where his first hostess is "the decent daughter of a lawyer from Des Moines and her apartment has just been burgled" (pp. 276-277). A flirtatious glance at a military checkpoint gives way to horror as a soldier is shot dead; Carmincross, where nothing happens, is indeed but on the periphery of the "main action" on the day on which the terror occurs, but innocents die nevertheless. The bride-to-be is killed at a mailbox, thus sending a chilling message to us all. Fortuna spins her wheel madly, and the novel itself revolves as if upon its rim.

"And how is the wee folk to grow up?" a confused young terrorist caught in the web of her own weaving asks near the end of Kiely's story (p. 242).

How indeed? Kiely provides no easy answers. Instead he offers a weary fatalism:

> Never before in what we call history has it been possible for everybody to become part of the action everywhere. So that the world can go mad all together and for the same reasons . . . [S]ome unseen diabolical craftsman is working us into one universal pattern. Perhaps he was always there, but now we can see on the instant the result of his work. Our spasms and convulsions are no longer isolated or parochial. All the world for the first time is my neighbour, and everybody sits with everybody else in every house, and the absurd comic climbs in and out of the screen and is aware of but never quite part of the action. (p. 97)

"Our streets vibrate with history," Kiely writes (p. 251), and they do so dramatically: "On the sidewalk a lump of clothes with the blood running out of it. People flat on that sidewalk as if a steamroller had rolled over them. A priest tells of two legs sticking out of a pile of rubble, of shattered bodies, you could see the life going out of them" (p. 259). And on and on. "It may," in Kavanagh's words to her who waits across the sea for his return, "be difficult to explain how or why destruction came to Carmincross" (p. 263). Likewise it is difficult to explain to us who read this book or to those of us who watch the television violence from Belfast or Soweto or Kabul or any one of a score of other locations across the globe.

We live in a world where there are no easy answers. Our students feel this confusion if dimly; Kiely articulates it with the voice of a master, a voice of regret, tinged with a genuinely mournful sense of loss. It is as if, like his Mervyn/Merlin, Kiely is "too old for dreams" (p. 253). The dream almost alone remaining to him now, "this Ireland, a mirage, grows dimmer" (p. 275): dimmer but not extinguished. Kiely's voice itself maintains the dream not only of Ireland but of a wiser, more decent mankind as well. Kiely does not write naively, and he does have real reason to bemoan the condition of his world. Still, he has a vision of something better to which we ought aspire: what we might call our best selves. If there is a single message that reads clearer in Kiely's recent work than any other, it is that it is possible finally to lose this notion of our best selves. If we do, then we will have capitulated to the stupidity which stamps the actions of too many of the men and women in *Carmincross*.

A Mentor-Protégé Relationship: A Look at Gail Godwin's *The Finishing School*

Beatrice Naff

This past Christmas I gave my seventeen-year-old sister Gail Godwin's *The Finishing School*. This summer as she and I sat in our family's parlor, we shared my memories and her recent experiences as we talked about the mentor-protégé relationship in this latest (1984) Godwin work. This novel addresses both of us. As a teacher and a student, we get to see how an older woman, Justin, looks back on her fourteenth year, the year she first met and then came to know Ursula, her finishing school teacher. After our little book talk, we decided female teachers might want to share this piece with aspiring female artists or thinkers since it captures so well an older woman's artistic reflections on a special teacher-student relationship, a relationship as out of style as the crumbling farmhouse that serves as Justin's private finishing school, yet a relationship that needs to be preserved—for humanity's sake.

In the opening pages Justin's first person narrative invites older and younger women to experience her one year with Ursula. It is almost as if Justin's adolescent journal reflections, now blessed with her loving yet adult analyses, reveal themselves in their fullness. Godwin makes Justin's narrative credible and inviting, by letting adult Justin become lost in reverie early-on:

> Last night I dreamed of Ursula DeVane. We were sitting on the crumbling threshold of The Finishing School, and she was telling me something in her rich and compelling voice. Then, suddenly, the sky turned an ominous color, the pond shivered like alive, the old pines hissed and swayed, and hard rain pelted down.
>
> "Let's make a run for it!" said Ursula, tensing her body for the dash.
>
> "But why?" I asked. "We'll get soaked. Why not sit here and wait it out?"
>
> "Ah, Justin," she said, putting her arm around my shoulders and giving me a shake. "Haven't I taught you anything? Didn't you learn anything from me? . . ."
>
> When I woke, I could still feel the pressure of her touch on my shoulders. I could hear the pitch of her tender, teasing voice. All day I have gone around under the spell of that dream.
>
> Is it the dream that has its hold on me, or is it Ursula herself, after all these years? In the dream we were the same age, both young girls; yet when I knew Ursula, that single summer, she was a woman of forty-four and I had just turned fourteen . . .

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> Fourteen. Be Fourteen again. Is that possible? Can I ride back into the country of youth, even on the conveyance of memory, propelled by imagination?
>
> It was a long time ago . . .

From here, the author lets the older Justin rehearse her inner life as she meets and comes to know her teacher.

The aesthetic presentation of young Justin's inner life is refreshingly enough. For once, we get to see a young woman thinking. Justin is not studying piano or ballet eighteen hours a day nor reading every adult classic she can cram into her day. Young Justin does not come across as an academic genius nor a precocious, suicidal writer. Instead, Justin thinks. We readers see an inside picture (coming second-hand, of course, through the older Justin) of a young woman thinking about her immediate life, about her relationship with her mentor and how that affects her values, lifestyle, and future. This inner drama—told with vivid images, allusions, themes, and symbols—is more than enough.

For example, we see how Justin, as a gifted young thinker, makes sense of and describes people, places, and daily events. To describe people, she often uses metaphors or similes. When she first meets Julian DeVane, Ursula's gifted pianist brother, Justin comes up with this image:

> He was still handsome—beautiful might have been an apter word—but the beauty had something desiccated about it, like a dried flower that has been preserved in shape and color but not freshness.

She paints places just as well. When she first moves from the big, white house in Fredericksburg, Virginia, to the northern suburb, she describes both the suburb and her feelings for it in a straight-forward way. She withholds no punches:

> What bothered me most about these houses, what bothered me even more than their lack of history, was that they seemed designed to make everybody as alike as possible. And the people in them seemed to conspire. In Lucas Meadows, all mothers seemed to be cooking dinner at the same hour, and all lights in the children's bedrooms went out at night before the lights in the master bedrooms. Even worse, every single living room had a lamp, its shade still covered with cellophane, on a table squarely in the middle of the picture window. That the mother in every one of these houses had gone out, on her own volition, and bought a lamp to fill her window exactly as her neighbors had done, seemed ominous to me. It was as though Lucas Meadows emanated a germ, and if you caught it, you would become like everyone else. . .

Young Justin makes do, too, with the lack of drama in her daily life. She is even able to transform her long and boring bus rides, making them moments for memorizing her mentor's manse:

> In the mornings I would take a window seat on the left side of the bus and wait for those few seconds when, after Ed Christinana and his sister climbed aboard and the bus gathered speed for the childless stretch of Old Clove Road, the DeVane house came into sight.
>
> I would stare intensely, trying to memorize details. Then, in the afternoons, I would take a window seat on the right side of the bus and concentrate all my attention toward those few seconds when the bus rumbled past the house.

In Justin's developing narration, vivid details like the above are laced with literary allusions she picks up while spending time with thinking people and artists. Because Justin makes this world real for us, we want to know more about her, we want—within our imaginations—to follow through on the allusions she remembers. She tells us about her grandfather's thoughts on J. Sanity Bach. Bach, this Virginia gentleman defended, is "one of the few places in the world where you could still find order." Or, she lets Ursula send us on an allusory mind spin. Ursula, a woman who studied drama at the Royal Academy in London, shares a line-up of strong female roles she once played: Goneril, Hedda and Medea. To add to the list, she talks about almost playing Saint Joan right before George Bernard Shaw's eyes. We hear, too, beginner's musical pieces such as Beethoven's "Fur Elise" and see that even liberated female dramatists make fine use of Biblical allusions, like "not hiding your light under a bushel," an allusion emerging Justin takes to heart.

Just as naturally, older Justin weaves symbols into her story. Throughout it, we see how Justin's bike, her father's old Raleigh bike, comes to symbolize her means toward freedom. She can leave her new suburban home, take off on her on, and experience the illusion of going somewhere. Her bike makes it possible to leave her despised world and bike instead to what Ursula called "the good life," Ursula's Hugenot family homeplace, a place where art still reigns queen.

As if this were not enough—images, allusions and symbols—we get to consider from beginning to end the themes that were sewn into the fabric of young Justin's life. The themes are usually first presented as maxims from Ursula. Then, as young Justin slowly stitches them into her reality by applying them to people and events in her own life, she eventually comes to accept them as her own. For example, after hearing one of Ursula's digressions on life, Justin internalizes its basic message and uses it in the form of a question to critique her own decisions throughout life:

> "There are two types of people," she once decreed to me emphatically. "One kind, you can tell just by looking at them at what point they congealed into their final selves. It might be a very NICE self, but you know you can expect no more surprises from it. Whereas, the other kind keep moving, changing. With these people you can never say, 'X stops here,' or, 'Now I know all there is to know about Y.' That doesn't mean they are unstable. Ah, no, far from it. They are FLUID. They keep moving forward and making new trysts with life, and the motion of it keeps them young. In my opinion, they are the only people who are still alive. You must be constantly on your guard, Justin, against congealing. don't be lulled by your youth. Though middle age is a traditional danger point, I suspect that many a fourteen-year-old has congealed during the long history of this world. If you ever feel it coming, you must do something quickly.
>
> Over the years, her vivid speech has stayed in my mind. "Am I congealing?" I ask myself. "Am I getting stuck in a role, repeating myself? Or I will think, Poor So-and So has congealed, gathering his same old themes around him like a shroud and being content to embroider them. I wonder if he knows it.
>
> What would I be like if I congealed? Would I know it? Would I go on doing my work? Would others know? . . ."

We see another theme, the whole idea of "enchantment," running through the piece. What is it that makes life between Ursula and Justin enthralling? Justin is obsessed. She wants to know everything about Ursula. She imagines her daily routines: Is she in the garden, preparing lunch, down by the pond reading or swimming, or listening to Julian playing her favorite scherzo? He describes the "curious tenderness" she has for her guide as she analyzes Ursula's power over her. She listens intently as Ursula gives her a clue concerning this mystical feeling:

> (She) explained to me that the song she had just sung had been about a special kind of love. "It's a love that can never be satisfied," she said. "That is its property. It's more like" . . . and she leaned her head back against the sofa and contemplated the low ceiling with its old beams . . ."it's more like a YEARNING. The person in the song is really addressing a powerful and constant state of yearning more than he is any real lover. It's the state of yearning that torments him, yet he also loves his torment. He NEEDS it. Because he understands that being able to feel this yearning so exquisitely is his secret strength." She reached over casually and put her hand on top of mine. "Do you understand that?"
>
> I could barely nod. I was so full of the things she was describing.
>
> "That is one of the best compositions Julian ever wrote," she said, removing her hand as easily as she had bestowed it. "That is the power of the artist, you see. If you are an artist, you learn how to trap the yearning and put it where you want it, put it where it goes. That's the secret all true artists come to know . . ."

Again, Justin takes her teacher's insight to heart, thinks about it, and uses it to make sense of this young but intense passion of her fourteenth year.

Because fictitious Justin takes the time in later life to put the finishing touches on this one special adolescent memory, women readers see a rare relationship, yet a possible one, a relationship between a creative female teacher and a creative female student, a relationship that needs to be preserved in schools. Educational research supports this very last point: these relationships do need to be preserved. Recent ethnographic studies of gifted students reveal that most artists and thinkers in creative fields develop mentor-protégé relationships early in life. Vygotsky may be able to explain why this is so. He suggests that we pick up cognitive processes in strengthening communities. We learn the thinking processes of those whom we desire to emulate. For example, Older Justin has learned to narrate life aesthetically as her teacher was able to do back when Justin was young. Like her teacher, older Justin engages us, her rapt and fledgling audience, with the same type of aesthetic narration she remembered Ursula using. Actually, *The Finishing School* is a study in how a young woman learns to cultivate an aesthetic perspective, a perspective that enables older Justin to tell the story she tells. Like Ursula, Justin in her reflections paints word pictures, alludes, abstracts, synthesizes and grapples. Other teachers and students have similar learning experiences. It is almost as if we pick up these thinking strategies by playing with loving counterplayers, players who are just a bit better, just a bit wiser and just a bit older. Mentor-protégé relationships need to be preserved in the liberal arts because they help create the inner processes, our inner working lives, that make us so

richly human. Godwin's *The Finishing School* will help liberal arts teachers and students make sense of their aesthetic educations because the novel captures such a fine one so well.

NEW GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF TEACHERS

Designed to aid education policymakers, the NCTE *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* are the result of a three-year review of the state of knowledge about language arts teaching and learning. They represent the best current thinking of the English profession on what today's new teachers should learn about subject matter and pedagogy, what attitudes they should develop, and what experiences they should have in their college training. They emphasize that becoming a skillful teacher is a lifelong process.

The guidelines reflect new theory and research findings about language as a powerful medium for learning. They stress the need for student teachers to become skillful analysts of the effectiveness of teaching methods and testing practices.

Qualifications for teachers of English and the language arts are explained in detail under three broad topics. Teachers must be knowledgeable about the *subject matter* of English: language development, composing and analyzing language, reading and literature, nonprint media, instructional media, evaluation, and research in their field.

Teachers' knowledge of *pedagogy* should range over instructional planning, performance and assessment; methods of teaching oral language, writing, reading, literature, and nonprint media; instructional uses of emerging technologies; and the uses of language for learning. The *attitudes* prospective teachers need to develop include concern for all students as individual learners, adaptability to their students' needs, and a commitment to continued professional growth.

Prospective teachers can best acquire this varied expertise, the NCTE Guidelines say, when their college teachers are models of effective instruction and when students have ample time to observe and assist model teachers and to take charge of classrooms themselves.

(*Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* by the NCTE Standing Committee on Teachers Preparation and Certification. 21 pages, paperbound. Price: $2.50; NCTE members, $2.00. ISBN: 0-8141-4730-5. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 47305-015.)

The Maturation Theme in Jon Cleary's Fiction

John W. Crawford

Among the various current Australian novelists treating the maturation theme, one of the best is Jon Cleary. Cleary is a prolific writer, having produced 30 novels, two collections of short stories and several radio and screen plays since he began writing professionally in 1945.

Cleary is often thought of as an adventure writer. As Brian Matthews argues, he does possess emphatically a strong zest for action. His temperament seems fitted for it. "He is attracted to movement, suspense, and resolution through decisive action, and this preoccupation dominates his work." In fact, violent action decides many of the personal dilemmas in Cleary's novels and resolves the human issues by default. However, this tendency toward violence does not detract from Cleary's skill at demonstrating sensitive understanding of small shifts in mood and of the delicacy of the thread of communication characterizing the relationship between man and woman. Among such skills lies his unique ability to show men, both old and young, maturing in their relationship with others.

The characteristic Cleary "hero" appears in many of his novels: a man of action plagued by an inner tentativeness and a fear of decision and responsibility. Paddy Carmody (*The Sundowners*), Vern Radcliffe (*The Climate of Courage*), Justin Bayard and Paul Tancred (*Season of Doubt*), Jack Marquis (*The Pulse of Danger*), and Adam Nash (*The Country of Marriage*) are all recognizably in this mold.

The very best demonstration of this taught but insecure hero is seen in his classic novel *The Sundowners*. There are several basic conflicts in *The Sundowners*, notably those between Paddy's bitter memories of his childhood and his equally deep rooted concern for Sean's future and between Venneker's public and private motives and values. And it is through these conflicts that the characters of Paddy, Sean, and Venneker are delineated.

Paddy is really not a selfish person, but he often paradoxically displays the image of selfishness. He cares little for settling down, for example, which indicates on the surface that he does not take Ida's and Sean's interest into consideration. When he sings boldly, "The whole bloody country's me backyard" (Scribner, 1962, p. 9), he makes himself sound like a great communer with nature, another Thoreau living in his Australian Walden.

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Later, in Chapter Two, Paddy seems indignant when Ida insists that Sean's few months of education do not make him ready for the university. Paddy responds with, "He can read and write, can't he? What more does he want?" (p. 17).

These kinds of retorts from Paddy suggest that he is selfish, and, in one sense, he is. But more important than his selfishness is the fact that he is afraid. Therein lies his immaturity. He is afraid to face a new way of life because a new way means responsibilities not faced before: the amenities of civilized society along with the possibility that he will fail in a settled situation just as his father failed.

Paddy proves that at heart he is caring. Two excellent examples show this less obvious trait. One occurs early in the novel with the crown fire episode, when he insists that he return to check on the Bateman family, whom the Carmodys had met on the way to Cawndilla. Paddy is especially impressed when he finds the Batemans not only safe but also ready to rebuild and start all over again. He later tells Ida, "I still can't get over it. All he had was the ax he held in his hand. Nothing else and he's gunna start all over again . . . He makes me feel a shiftless sorta coot" (p. 107). This response indicates a maturing man: we have the foreshadowing of his eventual change of heart. In one sense the crown fire incident is symbolic of purging in the literary tradition of Spenser's Red Cross Knights, singed by the dragon's fire, and Shakespeare's King Lear, singed by the lightning of the storm scene. In *The Sundowners* the fire occurs early and is, therefore, not the climactic scene as in the traditional purging episodes. However, we see the foreshadowing role of the event when Paddy later gives money to the Browns because he failed to win the sheep shearing contest. He is very proud of himself and Ida is too: "Now and again a bloke likes the world to have a good opinion of him" (p. 331). Paddy's announcement proves that he is not immune to society's amenities and pressures. He is *more* for the world than he is *against* it.

And Paddy's attempt to save what he has already lost in the second two-up game indicates further his sense of guilt in making his family unhappy. As the Carmodys move on at the end of the novel, Paddy's remark that "we'll find another valley" is the final note in his maturation process, a little late but obviously complete now.

Venneker is another adult who grows morally in the novel. He is the brash one who displays "something Olympian about his looks, in his great height, the set of his long head on the broad shoulders and the sweep of his magnificent white mane that was only slightly spoiled by the jaunty angle of his battered seaman's cap" (p. 31). It is the image of a Herculean hero, but he has an arrogance inappropriate for a benevolent victor. "I have been accustomed to it (admiration) all my life, but it still gives me a small pleasure to bring a little of the unusual into other people's lives." Such a statement typifies the attitude of Venneker in much of the novel.

But like Paddy, Venneker is not as tough as he appears. He too is more anxious for security than he wants to admit. Venneker is a roamer, cast

out of England for some unknown reason, destined to be a "remittance man." This alone has caused him to be bitter. As a vociferous *miles gloriosus*, he possesses the knowledge of the world and, therefore, contrasts markedly with Paddy. He, nevertheless, compares with the latter favorably in the quest that both suggest with their lives. Their surface responses are smokescreens motivated by the oldest of man's sins, human pride.

Venneker has been changed by the crown fire experience, too. When he remarks to Paddy, "Carmody, for the first time in many, many, years, I am tasting the salt of humility" (p. 106), he is swallowing hard. What a sign of purging! What a mild, mellow person compared with the earlier Venneker! Not that he is the epitome of meekness now—No, but we know that he is really human after all.

His internal struggle about marrying and settling down illustrates further his similarity with Paddy. He knows civilization and its fallacies; he too had experienced the familiar problems Paddy confesses. But he meets Mrs. Firth, and he cannot forget her and the joy of her companionship. Earlier, when the men go into Cawndilla for a night on the town, Venneker finds his way rapidly to Mrs. Firth's pub and becomes a bit exasperated with her attention paid to customers. "Is a cash register my rival for your affection?" (p. 190), he asks.

Venneker continues to grow fond of her and finally proposes. He has as much difficulty in developing a positive attitude about marriage as Paddy has had about settling. But the important thing to note is that he has changed. Venneker is now ready to establish a home. He has become a true Aussie. He recognizes the importance of an established loving home, and we see it clearly when he tells Sean not to hold the consequences against Paddy. "He ran away from home to look for something. . . .What he wants, just as much as you, is a home. He has a home, really. It is up there . . . in that Waggonette" (p. 373).

Sean grows, too. He is young and innocent, and in him we have a beautiful picture of the maturation process—much like that of Ike McCaslin from "The Bear" or Nick Adams from "The Killers." The few months spent in the course of events see Sean initiated into not only forms of evil but also patterns of physical and moral growth.

The latter is seen quite well as Sean meets Marge Bateman early in the novel. As the Carmodys return to visit and renew old acquaintances, Marge and Sean, very much like George and Helen in *Winesboro, Ohio*, learn to share affection. They kiss and then he makes a discovery:

> Then he knew, with a sudden flash of intuition, that there was really little between them; being a woman she was farther along the road than he, but the bold talk had been whistling in the dark. He hadn't the words to express what he felt, but he knew that from now on he need not be frightened of her. (p. 337)

A few minutes later he tells his mother that Marge is really a nice girl. Ida is silent for a while, aware that Sean has taken another step into adulthood.

The full picture of Sean's maturation is seen just before the final paragraph

of the novel. Sean has been admonished by Venneker to understand Paddy's motives and actions. Paddy has then declared his determination to find another valley where there will be a farm known as Carmody's Place, with an open door for everyone. Sean thinks to himself, as the family moves away in the waggonette toward the future, that neither parent knew his secret that "Down there at the farm, leaning against the hard body of Venneker, he had cried the last remnants of childhood out of himself" (p. 376). Sean is now ready for the battles, joys, and griefs of the adult world.

Cleary is a writer we Americans should not continue to overlook. He has received little critical treatment in this country, the earliest being a brief mention of *The Country of Marriage* in a 1962 issue of *Booklist*. A review of *The High Commissioner* in a 1966 issue of the *New York Times Book Review*, of *Season of Doubt* in 1968, and of *Remember Jack Hoxie* in 1969 complete the critical apparatus of Cleary's thirty novels. No criticism is recorded in *The Humanities Index*, *Essay and General Literature Index* or *The Abstract of English Studies*. Surely, such an artistic contemporary as Jon Cleary deserves more.

Values Clarification in Biblical Literature

Marlow Ediger

Literature for children should aid in achieving diverse goals for learners. Thus, as a result of reading relevant literature, pupils should achieve the following ends:

1. gain content to solve personal and social problems,
2. acquire needed information to be utilized as a guidance source,
3. view diverse points of view in terms of clarifying beliefs and values.

Useful insights into the problems of values can be obtained from reading, among other works, the teachings of Buddha and of Mohammed and the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. As an example of how such material can provide such insights for students, I will use the Old and New Testaments as providing a basis for learners to consider in clarifying their beliefs, ideals, and values.

The Ten Commandments

There are many books available written for children based directly upon content from the Bible. *The Children's Bible*, published by the Golden Press, contains many colorful illustrations of Biblical incidents and has related content written for pupils of elementary school age. The Ten Commandments (recorded in Exodus 20 in the Old Testament) can provide pupils with considerable food for thought. For example, the sixth commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—(King James version of the Bible) may provide content for stimulating discussions. Problem areas such as the following may be identified and discussed:

> Under what conditions could one human being justifiably kill another in American society? In capital punishment for selected crimes? In self-defense when one's own life is threatened? In selected wars or in all wars which involve one's own country?

The fifth commandment—"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"—can provide equally stimulating content for pupils to clarify. Pupils, of course, should realize that diverse kinds of families and home situations exist and should be respected. They might consider questions such as the following:

1. What does it mean to honour one's parents?
2. How can a person honour his/her parents?
3. Under what circumstances should their guidance and counsel not be accepted?

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4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of American homes?
5. What would be an ideal home situation? Why?
6. Can this ideal ever be achieved? Why?

When students are discussing possible answers to such personal and philosophical questions, problems may arise unless

1. pupils feel free to respond with unique, creative ideas,
2. the thinking of each participant is respected,
3. learners accept responsibility for ideas presented,
4. hypotheses presented in relationship to problem areas are evaluated thoroughly.

In addition, the Ten Commandments may also be studied in terms of legends or historical events that lead to their creation and presentation as a part of the Bible.

The Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount, recorded in the book of Matthew, chapters five through seven, has stimulating content for pupils to consider in evaluating and clarifying values. For example, one of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5, verse 7) reads, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." Pupils may be guided in discussing questions such as the following:

1. How should one behave in order to be considered a "merciful" person?
2. Has it worked in your lives (the learners) to do good to others and receive the good in return? Give examples.
3. What should a person do if "mercy" is not obtained for being "merciful"?

A rather complex set of values in the Sermon on the Mount is emphasized in the following words (Matthew 5, verse 44) " . . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you . . ." Pupils may be guided in discussing the following related problems:

1. Is it possible to love (like) one's enemies?
2. Describe the behavior of a person who may be considered to be an enemy.
3. How should you (the learner) react to a person who is an enemy?
4. Under what conditions have you treated a person with respect in response to "enemy behavior"? Was this deed or act rewarding? Why or why not?
5. How can we truly get along well with other human beings?

In addition to discussing such substantive issues, comparisons should be made of what major religions of the world stress should be a person's relationship to other human beings.

There is an interesting statement pertaining to values inherent in the work ethic in Matthew 6, verse 25: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" The teacher may guide learners in discussing related problems such as:

1. Do you know of individuals that live in this way? How do these individuals behave?
2. Do you think that American society stresses the importance of work excessively? Why do you think this way? Does the other extreme exist whereby the importance of work is minimized too much?

3. How important, do you think, should work be in comparison to time devoted to recreation?

The Good Samaritan

The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) is familiar to many elementary school pupils. It is a fascinating story filled with provocative content involving values. The Good Samaritan incident tells of an individual traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who is robbed and beaten seriously. Two religious leaders walk past the beaten individual and do nothing to remedy the situation. Finally, a Samaritan, disliked by inhabitants of the area where the robbery and beating took place, does what he can to disinfect and wrap the wounded areas with cloth. The Good Samaritan provides shelter for the wounded person in an inn. He also pays for the expenses involved in taking care of the robbed and beaten individual. The moral of this incident is, of course, that human beings should act like the Good Samaritan in their lives.

There certainly are many relevant questions that can be discussed with learners pertaining to being a Good Samaritan. For example,

1. How would a person who is a modern day Good Samaritan behave today?
2. Have you been a Good Samaritan to others? In what ways?
3. What dangers are involved in being a Good Samaritan? What rewards, if any, are involved in playing this role in life?

Further Sources for Values Clarification

There are numerous other Biblical stories, parables, proverbs, and events that may provide relevant content for pupils in clarifying values in life. The following provocative situations may gain pupil interest, meaning, and purpose in considering and clarifying values:

1. Abram and Lot's disagreement over land holdings and how the problem was solved (Genesis 13). Abram gave Lot first choice as to which land the latter wanted. Learners in the class setting may be guided in thinking of alternative solutions to this problem. They, of course, should discuss disagreements experienced with others and possible solutions to these disagreements. Classroom, cafeteria, and playground disagreements provide raw materials for problem solving situations.
2. Disagreements between Jacob and Esau. Esau was very hungry after coming home from a hunting venture (Genesis 25, verses 27-34). He then asked his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup. Jacob promised to provide the bowl of soup if Esau would give up his birthright of inheritance of property to Jacob. Esau was very hungry and agreed to the offer. Later on, he regretted having made this agreement. Pupils with teacher guidance may discuss alternative procedures for solving the problem involving Jacob and Esau such as providing a "bowl of soup" to a hungry person with no strings attached.
3. Joseph, a son of Jacob, sold into slavery. Joseph received special favors from his father such as a coat of many colors. His brothers

did not receive these privileges. One day when visiting his brothers herding sheep, Joseph was sold into slavery as a result of feelings of hatred and jealousy on the part of the brothers (Genesis 37, 39-45). Pupils should have ample opportunities to discuss (a) how Joseph might have behaved toward his brothers after having received special favors from his father, (b) how they should behave toward others who commit undeserved disagreeable and negative acts, (c) how Joseph's brothers might have felt, as the years progressed, about selling their brother into slavery, and (d) how they feel if someone has been wronged for no apparent cause or reason.

4. The Prodigal Son. The younger of two sons asked his father to give him his inheritance (Luke 15, verses 11-32). The father complied with the request. The son left home and spent his money lavishly until none was left. Ultimately, he was hired to feed pigs. He even ate corn husks as food. Finally, he decided to go home to his father and offer his services as a servant. The father waited for the son to come home and provided a reunion feast. The son also received good clothes to wear and the good things of life in general. The older son resented the feast and homecoming of the prodigal son. Related questions which pupils may discuss include the following: (a) Under what conditions should individuals apologize for apparent wrongdoings? How should this be done? (b) How should one deal with angry human beings? (c) What should you (the pupil) do if there is a child in the family who receives special favors continually that others do not receive?

In Summary

Pupils with teacher guidance should have ample experiences in clarifying values. Selected content from children's Bibles or an adult version of the Bible may be used in sessions devoted to values clarification. Values contained in writings from other major religions, of course, may also be examined critically in terms of standards to utilize in society. Learners should have ample opportunities to evaluate and discuss pros and cons of each set of values being examined. The consequences of each value should be understood in terms of its effect upon others.

History in Literature: *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*

Mallory S. Loehr and Joyce Wright

> My life was marked by good happenings, bad happenings and sad ones, too. There were times when the bad and the sad could have weighed me down. But to drink from only the good is to taste only half of it. When I died in that year 1204, I smiled, knowing that I had drunk fully of both flavors. I had wasted nothing.
>
> *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*, p. 193

Eleanor of Aquitane, wealthy, beautiful, witty, intelligent, a woman with a mind of her own, was an outstanding character in Twelfth-Century Europe. She was queen of both England and France, the mother of kings and the great grandmother of a saint. In *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*, Elaine Konigsburg draws a character sketch of this remarkable woman. While the facts are accurate, Konigsburg's style and method are inventive, and one cannot help but feel that Eleanor would approve of this version of her life's story.

To reveal the character of Eleanor and the history of the time, Konigsburg uses the Chaucerian device of a set of tales which are told to help pass the time. The setting is Heaven in the late Twentieth Century. This setting is in keeping with the concern for religion during the Middle Ages, but also accessible to the young adults for whom it is intended. Eleanor is waiting for Henry II, her second husband, to be judged to see if, after 800 years "Below," he is ready to enter Heaven. Abbot Suger, Empress Matilde (Henry's mother), and William the Marshal (a loyal and true knight) are waiting with Eleanor, and each in turn tells his story of a portion of Eleanor's life.

The voice of the teller is heard in each story. Therefore, the reader learns not only of Eleanor but also something of the raconteur. For example, William the Marshal states at the beginning of his story, "I shall weave my tale but not embroider it" (p. 126). The Empress Matilde lets us know immediately that, although she respected Eleanor, she did not always like her. Abbot Suger's speech is sprinkled with the expression "thanks be to God." Abbot Suger and Empress Matilde define the character of Eleanor while William the Marshal, dwelling less on her personality, details the history of her life and the time after she is put under house arrest by Henry II.

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The character of Eleanor is the focus or theme of *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver*. Characterization is one of Konigsburg's strengths as a writer, and her picture of Eleanor is sharp and cleverly executed. From the first page the reader is introduced to this unusual woman. As one reads, Eleanor's strengths and her weaknesses are exemplified by her actions and words and the reactions of others. In her time, Eleanor was certainly one of the privileged few who had wealth, intelligence, education, and the good luck to be able to rule over an empire which embraced England and a large portion of France. She outlived two husbands and all but two of her children.

The book's title hints of Eleanor's appreciation of the finer things of life. Wherever she traveled, she took her taste for luxury, beauty, poetry and music. Along with her daughter, Marie of Champagne, she invented the Courts of Love, courtly games that contributed to the code of chivalry that placed women on a pedestal rather then regarding them as property. She patronized artists, musicians, and poets. Encouraged by her, troubadours created the legend of King Arthur as we know it today.

Eleanor was an able administrator. She collected taxes, administered castles, and dispensed justice. She was Henry's partner but she was also his vassal. As a woman, she was subjected to house arrest because she and Henry did not agree on how to raise their children or how to allow them to grow up. Eleanor incited her sons to rebel against their father. Despite their strife, respect and love seem apparent between Henry and Eleanor. Eleanor loved Henry and she hated him. They struggled on earth, but she misses him in Heaven.

Although few, if any, young people of today will identify with Eleanor's life, they can identify with her spirit, for she approached the good and the bad in life with verve and she possessed the ability to make the best of every experience, even imprisonment. She was an extraordinary woman in the Twelfth Century and she would be unusual in our time as well. If Eleanor were alive today, she might be a business executive managing her home and work efficiently and with aplomb.

Adolescents need to study the lives of others to learn about themselves. Geoffrey Trease states, "It is interesting to learn what people wore in the days gone by, what their houses were like, and what they ate. But it is only moderately exciting. They [children] want to hear about individuals, named people—what happened to them. They want to hear about the fantastic characters and dramatic conflicts of an era" (*The Horn Book*, February, 1977, p. 18). Learning how others lived is particularly important for young adults, who are about to make decisions which shape their adult lives. *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver* allows the young reader to enter the adult world and to discover how others led their lives. Eleanor is in some ways quite modern. Her style and personality are naturally engaging. For anyone interested in history, people, or the Middle Ages, this book is a must. Girls can aspire to become strong women like Eleanor,

while boys can enjoy her lively wit just as the males of the Twelfth Century did.

Illustrations by the author nicely punctuate the text and create visual interest. They are in the medieval style of a manuscript illumination. The book is divided into four parts with a transitional interlude back in Heaven at the end of each. Each part is divided into numbered chapters without headings. Konigsburg tends to use short sentences with italics for emphasis. The story is told with the humor and liveliness which characterize all of Konigsburg's work. However, critics such as David Rees have pointed out that the language "does not sound fluent and natural . . . not . . . the way people talk" (*The Horn Book*, February, 1978, p. 84). Of course, we do not know how people talked in the Twelfth Century. However, the language does seem a bit contrived at times. But perhaps that is the way people talk in Heaven.

The speech of the characters is peppered with similes, vivid contrasts, repeated words, and an occasional play on words. For example, Abbot Suger says of Eleanor, "She is livelier than the play of light on any piece of stained glass" (p. 38). Suger also contrasts Eleanor and her first husband Louis, King of France: "The differences between Louis and Eleanor were apparent from the very start of the Crusade. Louis rode at the rear of the long caravan. Eleanor rode up front. Louis considered simplicity of dress a duty. Eleanor carried every comfort that was portable . . ." (p. 50). Suger further characterizes Eleanor when he states, "Indeciveness wears a person out. Eleanor was never weary" (p. 24). Finally, Eleanor shows her quick tongue when she says, "But whatever harm I do my soul by stealing, I shall make up for by the help and comfort I shall do my feet. Feet have soles too" (p. 55).

Because the tales are told in Heaven in the Twentieth Century, it is possible for Konigsburg to use an occasional anachronism to flavor her story. These tend to lessen the impact of the story, however, and are not really necessary. For example, Eleanor wants to watch an outdoor movie on earth. Although this might amuse an adolescent reader, it is in some ways distracting.

In addition to defining the character of Eleanor of Aquitane, Konigsburg has accurately given a great deal of information about the historical facts of the Twelfth Century. This history provides an interesting background for readers who may have little information about this era. It was fascinating for us to learn that Henry II laid the foundation for the English common law. He used a jury of witnesses because he felt that trial by jury was better than trial by combat or ordeal. Under Henry everyone received the same treatment under the law. Henry also established a system for collecting taxes. We learn that the name Plantagenet came from Henry's father, Geoffrey. It seems that Geoffrey always wore a stalk of wild broom, planta genista, in his hat. Henry had the same habit, and Plantagenet became the family name.

In an article in *The Horn Book*, Konigsburg states that writing for children

makes her research history and human emotions (*The Horn Book*, June, 1976, p. 261). Her research is evident in this book. Jean Fritz says, "[An author] must work hard to convince children that subjects for biographies actually lived" (*The Horn Book*, October, 1974, p. 179). Konigsburg's *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver* delivers a convincing account of a rare individual who lived eight hundred years ago. Literature such as this novel can make history and historical personages interesting, alive, and relevant for the young people of today.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Spring 1988

Focus: The English Teacher and the Profession

The teacher of the English language arts has, in recent years, became increasingly visible as reports of committees and task forces have called for improved student writing, critical thinking, analysis of literature, and so forth. This issue will focus on the professional role of the teacher in such matters as determining class size, teacher evaluation and supervision, curriculum development, classroom research, certification requirements, and teacher education.

DEADLINE
FEBRUARY 1, 1988

The Necessary Lie

Warren Westcott

Most of us who did our graduate work before 1980 were weaned on historical and "New Critical" approaches to literature which encouraged us to seek definitive interpretations based upon our knowledge of the author's life and times and upon internal evidence within the text itself. In the last few years, though, new waves of critical fashion have swept over us and are increasingly influencing the way we deal with literature in our classrooms. Perhaps the most interesting is the movement that Joanna Brent *et al.* called "transactive criticism" in a 1978 article in *College English* and that others have called "reader response" criticism. Whatever its name, the new approach stresses the importance of the transaction that occurs between reader and text during and after the act of reading takes place.

Reader response criticism seems to be rather closely related to the nineteenth century romantic idea that each person creates an individual world through the uniqueness of his or her personal vision. In the words of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," we live in

> the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear—both what they half create,
> And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts.

Perhaps the most popular and one of the earliest modern expressions of reader response criticism is Louise Rosenblatt's 1938 volume *Literature as Exploration*, which advances the idea that encouraging students to use literature as a means of expanding their range of personal experience is more important than teaching them a particular canon of literary history and interpretation. Probably the most radical current American proponent is critic Stanley Fish, who in *Is There a Text in This Class?* writes, among other things, about what he used to believe about literature—"used to" because what is written can of necessity report only the beliefs of the past.

The common strand running through all of the criticism is the idea that a reader enters into a symbiotic, transactive relationship with a literary text and that the text has only those meanings that a reader is able or willing to give it. In Fish's view, in fact, the text seems to have no independent existence apart from the reader or the community of interpreters who give it meaning. There are at least two corollaries of this position. First, a text

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will have different meanings for different readers because those readers differ in personality, experience, prejudices, and so on. Second, the meaning that individuals give to a text will change through time as the readers develop emotionally and intellectually and as they interact with other readers.

Let me illustrate with a personal example. Perhaps because religion figured large in my youth, I have always gravitated in my reading toward works that have some cosmic significance—that deal with man's place in nature, his relationship with his gods, the fates, and so on. Ever since I first read it as a college freshman, I have admired Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" as a story of a man stranded between the indifferent heaven and hell represented by the light and dark windows at opposite ends of the lawyer's office. Bartleby's "I Would Prefer Not To" is, to me, a cry of futile defiance to a universe as uncaring and devoid of significance as the blank prison wall he faces at the moment of his death.

Not long ago, I found myself engaged in a debate over that story with a colleague who has a radically different view of it. To her, the story "Bartleby" is a social commentary: its central character is a manipulator who brings the social order represented by the narrator to its knees by his refusal to bow to its conventions of behavior. I still like my reading better, but my understanding of the story has grown to encompass at least some features of this alternate reading as a result of our debate. The important point is that we each read the story from the perspective of our individual values and prejudices and we each arrived at a legitimate interpretation of the story. As a result of our interaction, our understanding of the story changed so that we each arrived at a new, though still differing meaning.

Literature, it seems, does not in any final sense contain meaning. Rather, it serves as a catalyst for the generation of many possible meanings in the minds of its readers. It is, of course, possible to have a "wrong" reading in Stanley Fish's sense that there are certain meanings that a majority of the community of interpreters will not accept. Most readers would agree that "Bartleby" is not a story about murder or incest, for instance. I heard Peter Rabinowitz at a recent conference state the matter this way: Although there is an infinite number of wrong readings of a given text, there is also an infinite number of possible right readings. And the more reading literature becomes a social activity, that is, the more readers communicate to one another about the literature, the faster and wider the range of possible meanings grows.

Most of us, I suspect, give at least tacit acknowledgment to this ability of literary meaning to grow organically when we encourage our students to discuss what they have read. The class constitutes a community of interpreters in which the readings of individual students are compared and new readings evolved. In such an atmosphere, reading is an ongoing process of discovery that ends only when the readers tire of a particular work or when the ringing of a class bell cuts off the making of meaning.

A curious and quite contradictory thing happens when we ask our students

to write essays about the literature they have read, however. Formal articles about literature—the kind that muster specific, factual evidence in defense of a central thesis statement about the author's intentions—demand that the students come to some sort of conclusions about meaning. In order to find those conclusions, they have to bring the play of multiple meanings to some sort of closure; and, to the extent that they cut off the possibility of additional interpretations, they falsify the meaning of the text. The organic growth of meaning that started in the transaction between reader and text and that may continue in the transactions between the reader and other readers is cut off as soon as a meaning is crystallized into a typescript, stapled, and handed in to the instructor. In short, in order to write the kinds of formal papers that we most frequently demand of them, our students must tell a lie or, more precisely, a partial truth. They must pretend that they have found definitive truth about a literary work when in fact that truth may be modified or disproved in the very next moment of the interpretive process.

All of us who write must play this game, of course. If I were to rewrite this essay yet another time, I would be tempted to make substantial changes. Looking back, I see, for example, that I have said nothing about Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist theories (which I confess I only *think* I understand) nor about the potential for a nihilistic view of language inherent in the reader response position. Yet I know that each time I allow myself to be sucked into the revision process, I will find myself caught again in the maelstrom of elaboration and association. In the interest of time and sanity, I must draw my boundaries somewhere and pretend that my argument is sufficient and complete. In short, this essay I am writing is itself a kind of lie.

The rhetorical stance of certainty in one's position can be important in the publishing world, too. I remember vividly the rejection letter I received several years ago in response to an article I had written on Ursula LeGuin's *The Lathe of Heaven*, a book that seems to revel in its own ambiguity. I had suggested multiple possible readings of the novel, but the rejection letter told me, in a very authoritative tone, that, before I submitted another manuscript, I should be certain that I had arrived at a definite interpretation. I suspect that my experience is not an unusual one. Uncertainty makes us uncomfortable, especially when we see it in the tangible form of a written document. To overcome that discomfort, to convince others to accept our work, we know instinctively or by hard experience that we must play the game of bringing our thoughts to a temporary and uneasy closure.

Unfortunately, we seldom, I suspect, articulate the rules of the game to our students. They see that on one hand they are asked to play with meanings in class discussions. On the other hand, they quickly learn that an essay opening with the statement "This story means many things to many people" is unacceptable. To alleviate their confusion and to help them become better writers, we need to make plain to our students the process by which a segment of the infinite range of meanings generated

by a text must be bounded and circumscribed to create a satisfactory critical essay. And it seems equally important to point out that such an essay represents only a temporary stay in the potentially endless elaboration of the literary work.

Although the necessary lie is most obvious in the study of literature because literature values ambiguities and symbolic language, one could argue that it is a part of every writing process that involves speculation or plural meanings. Writing always involves the not-writing of everything else that could possibly be said. If a student chooses to write this week's essay on the girl of his dreams, he simultaneously chooses not to write it about his summer vacation, though both topics may be important to him. By teaching our students the process by which we reach closure on the interpretive thinking process, we teach them a skill that they may use in almost every social and political arena. And by showing them the inherent tenuousness of their own opinions and conclusions, we may teach them to understand and perhaps to better tolerate their fellow liars in the world.

The Wise Way: A Gifted Program

Anna Lee Gibson and Jewell Worley

The gifted we have with us always. The problem is not their giftedness, but the schools' approach to their affliction. Wise County Public Schools, under the direction of Superintendent Jim Graham, organized a program that shines like a jewel in a desert of tried and failed programs over the country. This offering is called Summer Literature for the Gifted, but don't allow the unpretentious little name to fool you. The program is not the usual fluff and flake.

Summer Literature for the Gifted was begun in 1982. The beginning concept was simple. The students would be selected from each high school within the county. The selected students would meet at a central location. The method of instruction would be team teaching. The teachers would be selected for their unusual abilities. The duo would have the combined talents of drama, art, creative writing, speed reading, literature, speech, ancient and modern history, psychology, and a working knowledge of true giftedness.

We were selected to apply our talents to this new program. Oddly enough we had never met before the class was conceived. Jim Graham simply sifted through his files looking for unusual characteristics. We are, to say the least, unusual.

In the beginning summer, the program's only hope was to encourage a greater understanding and interest in literature. The study centered on an impressive selection of novels: *Brave New World, Fahrenheit 451, Death in the Family, 1984,* and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.* These novels were to be read prior to the beginning of the three-week session. Additional plans consisted of deep-muscle relaxation, speed reading, sensory awareness, and creative writing. We spent much of the winter of '82 inventing new methods for exploring novels.

The results of this first three-week summer session were astounding. The students produced a book of poetry entitled *Beyond the Gate.* The class wrote, produced, performed and filmed an original play. All of these accomplishments were achieved in addition to the class's frequent field trips to find food for thought. The students were taken to productions at Barter

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Theater. The class explored flea markets where they rummaged for characters, situations, and objects to use in writing. They traveled to malls looking for parallel situations found in novels. The students thought, laughed, smelled libraries, felt rain, shared fears, and grew to understand their true gifts.

The outcome of the first summer was rewarding, but the greatest shock came on the night of the grand finale for parents, friends, and school board members. The students asked for a short time for a special "secret" presentation. We envisioned the usual flowers for our time and devotion. Instead, the students read a poem directed to our Superintendent, Jim Graham. In the poem they appealed to him for a continuation of the program. They believed they had only begun to grow in their concepts of literature and writing. Thus the Young Writers' Workshop was born from the need of our gifted students.

The Young Writers' Program is a "pull out" session which meets monthly at a central location. The students leave each of their respective high schools to meet from noon until 3:00 p.m. with the team teachers. These meetings are a time to share creative writings with the teachers and fellow students. We, as instructors, suggest possible markets for writing. In addition, we are editors for three student publications produced from work received during the monthly sessions. Approximately four times each year, we submit creative writings to area newspapers for publication.

The program today is as strong and sensitive as it was in that first summer. There are always additions and changes to make it better. Among these additions are field trips to our local Southwest Virginia Museum, the June Tolliver House, John Fox, Jr.'s home, and the local outdoor drama— *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. Each summer we attempt to have a guest author in our class. Our future holds trips to Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina. The class is also scheduled to attend a session at Radford University, which will feature Anwar Sadat's wife, Jehan Sadat, as a guest lecturer. We believe these exposures to museums, dramas, personalities, and stately mansions are necessary to awaken the students' desire to learn more about their world. These guided excursions also serve as a rich storehouse from which to draw creative writings.

Each summer we are surprised to see students from earlier years appear in our classes again. Many are home for the summer and to them July is synonymous with Summer Literature. The class is so open that we have many other visitors. The discussions are often heated and thought-provoking, and visitors become involved as readily as the students. We always leave with a feeling that we have in a small measure stimulated these minds to deeper thought.

The students' response over the years has secretly told Wise County the program was a valid addition. But when Virignia Tech selected the Summer Literature/ Young Writers' Program to receive an Excellence in Education Award, this secret became public knowledge.

Staging a Literary Festival

Sue Poe and Hazel Jessee

We wanted students to enjoy reading Charles Dickens, to find a spark of interest as well as the challenge of reading a classic; we wanted students to have more than a cursory, superficial knowledge of Dickens. We wanted them to experience the pleasure of becoming an expert about something. For these reasons, we intended to make their study of *A Tale of Two Cities* something special and different. We chose the idea of staging a Dickens festival as a means of involving the students in an interdisciplinary study and of making the book real to them.

Persuading eighth graders to read Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, even if they are superior ability students, is no easy task. The style, language, history, and structure of the book block many adults as well as students. However, the book is full of adventures, battles, intrigue, and love, all of which appeal to eighth grade readers. Breaking through the barriers of style and language unlocks a classic story that students will remember for a lifetime.

For students more accustomed to reading Stephen King's thrillers, a historical novel presents major challenges and difficulties. Many students have little or no background in the history of the period. Their knowledge of Charles Dickens is usually limited to Scrooge and Tiny Tim from *A Christmas Carol*.

Teaching this book, therefore, requires plenty of energy and imagination; simply assigning chapters to be read and discussing them leaves great voids in the students' understanding of the book. We wanted the eighth graders reading *A Tale of Two Cities* to connect with the book, to show interest in and enthusiasm for the adventure of the book, and to acquire knowledge of the French Revolution and Eighteenth Century England.

Students need a teacher's help even to read for literal meaning alone in *A Tale of Two Cities*. They cannot be turned loose to read the first 100 pages. The vocabulary, sentence structure, and style are difficult in themselves, and tuning in to another time period adds an additional reading block for junior high school students. There are so many characters and so much happening in the book that students need to go at the book slowly in the beginning. The book itself, in fact, begins slowly, encouraging readers to hear the well-used word and the memorable quotation and to feel Eighteenth Century relationships and situations and compare them to their own. Their teacher has to get the students started in seeing the truths of

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the book—self-sacrifice, justice, power, money, and class struggles—that remain truths in their worlds.

A group of teachers, the school librarian, the assistant principal, and instructional specialists from the school administration office met to generate ideas for activities and events for the literary festival. We used the following plan of action to guide our work:

1. Decide upon a novel or an author upon which to base the EVENT.
2. Establish a working committee.
3. Set dates: We chose December because it coincided with Virginia's Reading Month and the holiday theme of much of Dickens' other work.
4. Begin planning early. We began in August.
5. Solicit a speaker or performer. We chose Dr. Elliott Engel, a noted Dickens scholar from North Carolina State University.
6. Secure the approval of the principal. We sent him a budget request and a logistical plan of what we wanted to do, how we wanted to do it, use of rooms, scheduling, etc.
7. Secure the support of the library staff.
8. Secure the support of the English Department.
9. Explain the event to the rest of the school faculty.
10. Determine the depth expected in background study, novel reading, film viewing, student research, and student presentations.
11. Search for and order materials.
12. Prepare a bibliography.
13. Plan for audiovisuals.
14. Meet with representatives of other departments for assistance.
15. Plan displays, posters, decorations.
16. Secure permission to videotape the speaker.
17. Establish an invitation list and write personal notes. Students can do this task.
18. Maintain contact with the speaker.
19. Arrange for newspaper coverage.
20. Involve your community - parents, shopkeepers, grocers, etc.
21. Enjoy the festivities.

We scheduled a variety of activities for the students when they began their study of Dickens. We prepared bibliographies of works in the public and the local university libraries. Students chose from a list of possible research topics and began reading. We secured speakers to participate in what we called the Lunchtime Lectures; students signed up in English class to report to the library during half of their lunch period to hear guest speakers on such subjects as Dressing and Dining with Dickens, *Great Expectations*, The Magic of Science, Women Had a Dickens of a Time, or Dickens on the Stage. Students also presented some of their research projects during a week of Lunchtime Lectures. Over one hundred books from the public, school, and college libraries provided students with ample

sources of information about topics they were researching. Students shared their research in an oral presentation for which they prepared posters or other visuals. The best presentations were selected for the Lunchtime Lectures in the library.

Dr. Elliott Engel, professor of English at North Carolina State University, presented his lecture, "Dickens, Dallas, and Dynasty," to an evening audience of parents, students, and teachers. He visited classes the next day to deliver his lecture, "Dickens and Captain Murderer," and to discuss *A Christmas Carol* and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The major activity of the unit was an afternoon-long Dickens Festival which the students staged in the gymnasium. Tension mounted as the day for the Dickens Fair approached. Careful planning resulting from research into Dickens' time provided students with activities suitable for a Victorian Fair and with information on clothing for costumes. Invitations to the fair went to English classes, school administrators, teachers, and supervisory personnel.

One class period prior to the fair, students decorated the gymnasium with the week-long accumulation of materials for their activity in the fair. They also used this time to don their costumes, ranging from pieces of clothing borrowed from parents and grandparents to authentic period costumes obtained from rental companies.

All the scurrying, shouting, and worrying that the fair would not be ready for the first visitors proved groundless. As the first fairgoers entered the gymnasium, the performance got under way. Puppet shows commenced, dancers took their first steps, musicians plied their instruments, clowns played jokes, fortune tellers scanned the crowd for customers, and freaks set to work to garner believers. Students performed scenes from *A Tale of Two Cities* and *A Christmas Carol*, furnishing specific insights into each novel. Participation in activities supplied fairgoers with the realism usually lacking in school programs designed only for observing. They could play games of the period, visit the Old Curiosity Shop for a souvenir, or stop by the food booths for food and drink.

The fair proved a huge success both for the students who staged it and those who attended it. It involved actions that junior high students are not too old or too sophisticated to enjoy: wearing costumes, making believe, and entertaining others.

One student said, in her evaluation of the fair, "If we ever get another chance to do something like this again, I'd be ready and willing. The fair was not what I expected it to be. I'd *love* to do it again and again and again!" Another stated, "My favorite part was the festival on Friday. I felt as if I were really in a fair of Dickens' time." And finally, this student's remarks captures the feelings of many other students, "I enjoyed last week very much. It expanded my horizons of a period I knew hardly anything about. The speakers were very good, and I enjoyed the way we came together and put together one big thing."

The entire fair was like a play; every student had a part and performed it for an audience. Charles Dickens and his works truly came alive; who knows, there might be a future Dickens scholar among them.

Life in a Cocoon on I-81

Fog draws me in,
Insulating me,
Safe and secure

the whir of the engine
my bones against the seat
my friend K92 FM.

Me
In a sea of clouds,
Pondering
What's been,
What will be,
As I glide down a ribbon,
On a landscape scrolling.

by Edgar H. (Herb) Thompson

Great English Teaching Ideas

EDITOR'S NOTE: The teachers who contributed the following great ideas share more than just a knowledge of their subject matter and a willingness to try something new. They also share a belief in their students' abilities to think, grow, and learn. All are teacher consultants in the Northern Virginia Writing Project.

Joyce H. Jones, Guest Editor

Of Puritans, Plymouth, and Process

"Oh, God, look at this. I got a C."
"C? You're lucky. I got a D!"

Such were the comments as I passed back the first quizzes of the year to my G/T eleventh grade class. It wasn't that they hadn't read the material; the problem was that we were doing the *beginning* of American literature—John Smith, William Bradford, *et al.* Difficult reading at best.

Driving home that afternoon, I found myself bothered by their problem and pondered how I might help them be more successful with their reading assignments. As I thought back over the past few years, an idea struck me.

The next day, I entered the classroom armed with what I hoped would help them be more successful readers. I began the class by asking them why they had found the reading so difficult. As one of their classmates listed their responses on the board, the following statements rang out:

"It's boring!"
"I got distracted by the noise in the house!"
"I don't care about this stuff!"

The responses went on and on. Finally, they ran out of steam, and we examined the list of about 24 items to see what we could discover.

Jill offered, "Even though it's boring, I guess it's important if I want a good grade in English this year."

Pat added grudgingly, "I could have asked my brother to turn off the stereo, I guess."

Nathan said, "I guess the fact that I don't care about this stuff is kinda a poor excuse. After all, these guys are written about in this expensive book, so I guess they must be important!"

After a few seconds of digesting what had been said, a voice from the back piped up: "You know what I've noticed? We're in control of about nine-tenths of the things we've listed on the board."

I smiled as they discovered point #1: they controlled their own reading environment. We talked about what factors could be controlled, what priorities could be set, and what decisions about reading needed to be made. Most acknowledged that, because grades are important to them,

they really need to know how to read better. Someone mentioned the PSAT, and that was all the motivation they needed. As we talked more, they began to feel a little better about controlling their reading, and then Aaron said, "But, this still doesn't help me really *understand* what I read. I can *control* lots of things, but how can I understand this stuff?"

I was ready for that question and passed out a ditto of an excerpt from Jonathan Edwards' *Personal Narrative* and five questions about the excerpt. After the groans had subsided, my directions were to read the passage as they would normally read an assignment of this kind, answer the questions, and then think about *how* they had read the passage, i.e., their *reading process*, and write that down.

As the room became silent, I followed my own directions. After about five minutes, we began to share our reading process with one another. I started by reading them what I had written about re-reading the first sentence and looking for the important words, being distracted by certain words and phrases when my "eyes got ahead of my mind," and trying to get a feeling for what the author felt. I invited them to share what they had written. Together we began to look at the way we read. Jeni discovered that she read in "one big swoop" and tried to ingest the entire paragraph at once. Peggy said she tried to "feel what Jonathan Edwards had been feeling" as she read. Cyndi offered (somewhat smugly!) that she had "looked at the questions first and then read for the answers." Pat admitted that he had "become bored" at the end of the first line and had given up because he "figured I would never get it anyhow." We looked at what processes had worked for the students who had answered the questions correctly.

Soon Pat said, "If I had looked at the questions first, I might not have gotten turned off at the end of the first line."

Jeni responded, "If I could train myself to read more slowly, I wouldn't have missed this question about detail. I just read right over the answer!"

They examined their reading processes, and the next step became clear. I handed out a similar paragraph; they began reading and answering the questions, trying to incorporate some of what they had learned from other people about the reading process. As I read them the correct answers, grins began to appear and exclamations of "Awww Right" could be heard as they marked their papers. Most students missed fewer questions.

As we looked at what we had learned, similarities in reading and writing became apparent. We had improved reading scores by examining our process, sharing our findings, and learning from one another just as we had learned to improve our writing by examining our process, sharing our work, and learning from each other.

I was satisfied. Students had done exactly what I had wanted them to do, even though their motivation was different from mine. First, they had admitted the difficulty of the material and shared their own difficulties with each other; second, they had identified a basic problem and decided how best to cope with that problem; third, they had looked at their own

reading processes and made some changes in them; and finally, they had seen the fruits of their labor. Focusing on process in reading as I had focused on process in writing had worked!

Shirley Whiteman
Robinson Secondary School
Fairfax County.

Owning the Literature and the Lesson, Too

We sit quietly, all thirty-one of us in that last period English class, intrigued.

"I'm Erin Sullivan, reporting from Baltimore, and my special news report tonight features famous writer Edgar Allan Poe on this 137th anniversary of his death."

Next, Poe, himself, joins us. Shahira, assuming the voice of this author, reads sections of her journal to us. Her entries are interspersed with narrative commentaries by another student that establish a framework of time, place, and fact.

Last, Poe's wife speaks to us and tells a few tales of her own through Krysia's dramatic monologue.

The class and I fire questions. When the 2:45 bell rings, the speakers linger to talk with remaining students who still demand answers.

Two years ago, preparing to teach the usual American literature and research skills to sophomores, I decided to try a non-traditional approach, role writing. I asked each student to select any author or person from any time period in American literature from 1650-1950 and to compose a role writing. Initially, the students had to decide four things: their role (who they will be), what situations they will be in, what form/writing will be used (letters, interview, speech, etc.), and what is to be researched (TBR). For example, Krysia submitted the following topic:

role - I am Virginia Clemm
situation - come back from the dead
form/writing - talking about "poor Eddie's" health, writing, obsession with death (monologue)
TBR - marriage relationship; Virginia's death; Poe's writing and problems at that time; theme of death and what made him write about it.

The suggested time limit for the reading of the role writing was 3-5 minutes, but students' works ran as long as 15-20 minutes. A conference during this designing stage helped the students focus their topic and organize their research. During their drafting, further conferences and peer evaluation helped them revise and edit their work.

Throughout the year, two or three weeks before a unit began, students whose topics related to that period met and planned the unit. At this time, students sometimes chose to combine their role writings into a group presentation. I explained that their presentations, along with the literary

works, would form the content of our unit. The students and I then determined the order of the speakers, planned the sequence of the literature, and coordinated the audio-visual materials. (Some audio-visual must accompany each role writing.) I reviewed a few fundamentals of public speaking and reminded the students that they were now resident experts on their topics. Consequently, they should be prepared to conduct a question-answer session after their presentation both for the class and me.

Several things amaze me about the role writings and sharings with the class. Some days, each of my sophomore sections is doing something different. Rather than become frantic, I can relax because the class is really in their hands. They are organized, informed, psyched. I also experience the evolution of a presentation topic. For example, one student originally opted to be Anne Bradstreet and to write several diary entries on the difficulties facing her as a Puritan woman and writer. Her final draft was a conversation between two Puritan ladies, one who was scandalized by Anne and one who supported her. Through the dialogue the student actually explicated one of the poems we were to study in class.

With this process students can be teachers and the teacher can be a student. These student speakers have explored more about writers, eras, philosophies and issues than I have ever covered in my previous years of directed discussion or lecture.

Lorraine Cheban Latzko
Bishop Denis J. O'Connell High School

Macbeth for the Reluctant Student

"WE AIN'T GONNA DO NO SHAKESPEARE STUFF, ARE WE?"

You've probably participated in discussions that begin with this question. In my Alternative English 12 class, the following exchange came after a discussion on sex and violence in the movies and in our society. At the end of that discussion, I mentioned doing *Macbeth* and waited for them to make the connection. "You mean Macbeth's got sex and violence in it?"

"How does seven murders, one suicide, one attempted murder, assorted sword fights, and a beheading, all committed, at least in part, because a man's wife wants to know if he's man enough to do it, sound?"

With that, we were into it. What follows are some things we did that you can do to help your students to be able to say, "Yeah we did *Macbeth*."

BACKGROUND ON SHAKESPEARE'S TIME (fun and games in Elizabethan England): Students Search.

List forms of entertainment and other topics of interest in Elizabethan England that can be found in the school's library. Let the students pick one, and give them two days to dig up some dirt on how Elizabethans had fun. I suggest *The Visual Guide to Shakespeare's Life and Times* and

Marchette Chute's book *Shakespeare of London*. The students will share information in a circle. They may speak out of order if they make a connection between what they found and something just said by another student. The informality is important because it is less threatening.

BACKGROUND ON MACBETH: Students learn the plot.

Tell them the story. Let them have a copy of a plot outline and give them copies of the *Macbeth* road map from the Teacher's Guide to *Few Voices . . 4* (Ginn and Co.).

SHOW TIME: Students watch *Macbeth* after they know the plot.

- Watch a film version (like the Royal Shakespeare version) of *Macbeth*. Yes! Watch a film version of *Macbeth before* they "read" it. If you have problems with this approach, say to yourself, "Shakespeare never intended this to be read anyway," five times or until the spell passes.
- Watch one act each day.
  - Remind the students what they are about to see and what to look for.
  - Turn on the film as soon as possible after the bell has rung. This allows for a question-and-answer period after each act. It also allows you to focus their writing for the evening.
- Have them become a character and think/write a response to the question: "Why did you do it?" This writing can be done as homework.
- Ask students to share their writing with a partner for a few minutes before the movie starts.
- Give them a study sheet as an additional aide to viewing.
  - The sheet can help structure the question-and-answer period after each act.
  - It can be seen as raw material for later writing assignments.
  - It can be used for an upcoming "World's Team Championship of Macbeth Trivia" to be played as a reward for their cooperation during the unit.

LET'S WRITE: Students draw on their viewing and background work to write essays. (Note that the essay is not the only appropriate form to be used here. You or the students can choose other forms as well.)

At this point, students will be receptive to a close look at selected passages from the written text of the play. I do not have them read the whole play. Beginning by sharing their think/writings to find a subject, students use their writing processes to write an essay. Work in a lesson on note taking by modeling note taking about the lines studied on newsprint, thereby having a visual reference for the students to use when proving their points. In turn they learn about documenting their points with specific references.

When they write, students need a flexible, unrushed schedule in order to feel successful. Frequent sharing with positive responses given by other students will help. I find that the less you have to do with the decisions made in the paper, the more confidence the writers will develop. They

need constant reminders to use their processes, not the teacher, in order to arrive at a product that they are proud of.

Students have a right to be able to say things like, "Yeah, we did *Macbeth*." They can do what we let them believe they can do.

Don Wiest
J. E. B. Stuart High School
Falls Church, Virginia.

Getting From Here to There

Where was *Here*? Here was my present situation: (1) I taught writing in a workshop format, using a writing-as-process approach; (2) students selected their own topics for writing and then chose a form that best enabled them to communicate their ideas to readers; (3) however, my students never selected a poetic form because I never suggested that poetry was legitimate alternative to prose. I constructed a poetry-avoidance barrier in my path and could not appreciate the possibilities that poetic form offered to a writer.

Where was *There*? There was a future I envisioned: (1) I would learn to appreciate poetic form as a possible vehicle to transmit meaning; (2) I would encourage and support my students in their first poetic attempts; and (3) I would avoid formula poetry (tanka, haiku, cinquain, diamante) that often stifled students' genuine writing voices because the focus in formula poetry is on the form, rather than on discovering meaning and sharing that meaning with others.

Then the question became: How do I get from Here to There? I knew where I was (Here), and I knew where I wanted to go (There), so what I needed was a reliable road map. I finally found the directions I needed, not at The American Automobile Association, but at Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., in a book entitled *Getting From Here To There* by Florence Grossman (1982).

Having read Grossman's book, I acquired a new understanding of poetry. I realized that poetic form was another option for a writer who had a message to share. Sometimes the best vehicle to deliver the message was a short story, sometimes it was an essay, and *sometimes* it was a poem. Once *I* had broken through the poetry-avoidance barrier, I was determined to explore with my students what was on the other side.

At the beginning, I never mentioned the word *poetry*. We just spent time each day writing in our journals about topics I selected from Grossman's book. For instance, school memories and people. We wrote, and, on a volunteer basis, we shared our thoughts. After about a week of journal writing, I selected several poems from our basal reading series, and we discovered together what a poem looks like on the page, how the words are arranged on the lines, the use of punctuation, and the meaning of stanzas. Then, we returned to our journals and selected an entry that we wanted to share with others in poetic form. In a writing workshop, we

helped each other craft the poems from draft to revision to editing. Even in the first poems, I heard my students' strong writing voices coming through because their intended meaning was the focus in the poems, rather than a form demanding a specified number of lines, syllables, or words. And the result was the birth of thirty poets in our classroom, twenty-nine of them under age fifteen and one pushing forty.

For all of us, poetry became an option that we had not realized was there. After several initial experiences with writing in poetic form, we no longer wrote poetry as an exercise in writing poetry. Rather, poetic form was added to our writing repertoire, so that it became one more way of sharing our thoughts with readers.

Mary Simpson
Rippon Middle School
Woodbridge, Virginia.

Literary Clue: A Game of Style

One of the most exciting parts of learning is the ability to recognize style. This recognition occurs so often that we seldom think about it. We all operate on this level of appreciation when we say, "I like Vivaldi" (or Monet, or Ibsen.) What we are saying is that we like something that we have generalized about their style, though we usually could not say when we made that generalization or that decision. Teaching our students "appreciation" means just this: to perceive and recognize aesthetic quality. Although gaining these insights is an ongoing process that develops with education over the years, teachers can make students cognitively aware of what will gradually become a spontaneous response. My one-day lesson, "Introduction to Appreciation of Style," scheduled at the conclusion of a lengthy poetry unit, has students involved in a game that demands their knowledge of stylistic elements.

The lesson involved a couple nights of library research on my part but that was really half the fun. My sophomores had studied twenty poems by as many poets, so my research was to collect a poem for each poet that bore a great similarity to the one we read in class. Many of the poets were eliminated immediately because I could not find volumes of their works. I ended up with ten carefully chosen poems, typed them with title but no author's names, and made a copy for each student.

What did I look for when I chose the poems? I thought of what I would be asking my students to do, that is play a guessing game based on what they had read and learned. Each poem, therefore, had to contain a clue that would help the students decide who had written it. For example, I chose a poem by Dickinson that liberally used approximate rhyme and had very short lines, elements which had also marked the textbook selection by her.

I helped them to think in terms of clues by having them review the elements of style before we started. Rhyme, rhythm, tone, language, level

of difficulty, and placement on the page were among others we had studied throughout the unit. I listed these on the board along with the names of the poets we had studied. We talked a little bit about how students can often distinguish each others' handwriting, and I explained that the same process of analysis can be used with poetry.

I presented each student with the package of ten poems and asked them to work in pairs, listing an author for each poem along with a reason for each choice. Their first reaction was wide-eyed incredulity. "Impossible!" But once they started, the room was loud with arguments.

"This sounds a lot like 'Lake Isle of Innisfree.' All that description."

"This has to be a black poet. Look at the dialect. It's either Hughes or that other guy."

"Definitely Frost - it's blank verse. See, da Da da Da da Da da Da da Da!"

I first challenged them by asking them to keep their textbooks closed and work from memory in choosing any of the twenty poets listed on the board. When frustration overruled challenge, we moved to open textbooks, and I eventually narrowed their choices to just the ten poets. Some had to do a bit of shuffling but at the end all had matches. Most had about half correct, a result that I considered excellent.

I brought in the books I had used for my search. Examining these books helped them to see how much poetry exists beyond their textbook. They were surprised to see pages and pages of Frost's verse looking as dense as a novel. To learn that Dickinson wrote more than 1700 poems is a fact but to see the thick book with the index itself numbering twenty pages is an experience. We had read that Booth liked to write about the sea. Now we saw his volume which displayed a serene photo of the Maine coastline.

Many left the room still gloating about their success. "I knew that was Nash! Who else would rhyme 'depot' with 'heap o'?" Some, of course, were surprised at what they didn't know. But, most importantly, they each had experienced a step into the world of appreciation.

Margy Webster
Paul VI High School
Fairfax, Virginia

A Student-Centered Approach to Teaching Poetry

"What're we going to do now?" asks a tenth grader the day after completing our study of epics and *The Odyssey*.

"We're going to do other types of poetry."

"Bummer!" "Bo-ring!" "Do we hafta?" "Why are you doing this to us?"

How to overcome this attitude among students that poetry is something that English teachers *do to* them? I want to help my students to read and understand poetry more easily, and I want to foster in some young poetry-resisters an appreciation for the genre. I also believe that students will

take more interest in and responsibility for their learning if they are involved in the planning, the doing, and the evaluation of what goes on in my classroom. For several years, therefore, in addition to writing their own poems, my students have picked the poetry studied in class, and they have determined the criteria for and participated in the evaluation of their poetry projects.

To begin the study, I fill the classroom with every volume of poetry I can find. After I give students a brief idea of what sorts of poetry to look for in which books, they have two or three class periods in which to browse through as many of the books as possible, looking for poems that they like, or, in some cases, simply do not hate. When students find appealing selections, they copy them onto transparencies for use with an overhead projector. Each student has to contribute at least one poem. While the students search, I answer questions and make suggestions. Invariably most students begin to share what they are finding; some even read out loud to each other.

After I screen the poems on the transparencies for duplicates and group works by a single author, the first student shows his or her poem on the overhead projector, reads it aloud, and tells why he or she selected it. The selector then may explain anything that he or she noticed about the poem—if it rhymes, what images are present, what feelings the poem conveys, whether or not there are what my students came to call "DHM'S" or "deep hidden meanings," etc.

Each year, a few students are quite good at figuring out poetry and need little assistance from me or the class, but for the students who are not so adept at the process of unlocking a poem or for a poem that is particularly difficult or interesting, I use a reading technique called "cognitive modeling." This technique works best when I am not already familiar with the poem being considered because students can then watch the so-called expert go through her thinking process.

Cognitive modeling is taking turns thinking out loud. I start the process myself the first time by covering up all but the title and the first line. I then say out loud everything I think of after reading the exposed line(s) of the poem. I speculate about possible meanings, pose myself questions about what is coming later in the poem, talk about the poet's use of language, bring in any previous experiences I have had that might help me to understand this poem, admit that I am puzzled, etc.

After I uncover and think out loud about the next few lines, there are usually several students who are eager to plunge in and continue the cognitive modeling process of talking and questioning until the whole poem has been mulled over and connections have been pointed out by several different people. If a class contains no volunteers, I may continue through the entire poem by myself, or I may start around the class with each student taking a turn. We then go back through the poem and discuss it as a whole after almost everyone has had something to say.

The cognitive modeling process works beautifully for poetry because students get to hear classmates and me struggle with making meaning. It slows down reading and forces students to try to make all the sense they can out of a piece of writing they might otherwise dismiss as too hard or not worth their time. But day after day of classtime spent in slow reading would be deadly. Consequently, we do not use the process on every poem, and students have to practice on their own.

By the time the class reads and discusses each student's poem and sgoe through the cognitive modeling process on several, students have been exposed go poems written in different times, in different styles, for different purposes. Without vocabulary lists of poetic terms and without a formal survey, students know much more about poetry than they did at the beginning. The have also done some writing in their logs about their own exploring of poems they like.

Now they begin to assemble their own anthologies of poems for the project. The first time I taught this unit, the students decided that the anthology would include at least seven poems chosen during our study and three original poems written for the project. Subsequent classes did not change the number.

Students also decided that to earn an A, a project would contain three writings about each poem, including the original ones, and that their reading/writing groups and I would have to agree that the writings were clear and answered the questions below. There was no specified length for these writings. In addition to the writings students could choose to do, each student was to write an introduction to his or her anthology—a sort of personal road-map—that would explain any connections among the poems and would generally help a reader to make sense of the selections.

The three writings were to answer the following questions:

1. Explain the concrete meaning of the poem—is it about a particular tree or experience or feeling or what?
2. Explain how the poet conveys the meaning to the reader—what sorts of language or imagery does the author use; are there DHM'S or underlying ideas or themes to be explained?
3. Explain your reaction to the poem—how did it make you feel; what connections does it have to your own life?

To earn a B on the project, students could omit one of the three writings on each poem; to earn a C, students would include only one writing per poem. No one wanted to set criteria for a D project. At this point, the students were confident that they had something to say about the poems—especially if they had selected them.

The results of the student-centered unit on poetry? In their writing evaluating the unit, the students were able to articulate several ways in which their knowledge and understanding of poetry had grown. Many stated that they were now reading poems instead of dismissing them as unfit for high school students. Almost everyone endorsed the student selection of

the poems to be studied, and some students even admitted that they were looking forward to studying more poetry in future English classes. I have kept copies of many of the student's anthologies—they were reluctant to leave me the originals—and I enjoy reading through these records of the poetry my former students enjoyed when they were ninth or tenth graders.

Pamela Curtis
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Fairfax County.

Integrating Reading and Writing Using Children's Literature: A Novel Approach

When teaching reading, elementary educators are encouraged to use a horizontal approach that allows time for enrichment and life beyond the basal text. One excellent method of enrichment is to spend time exploring a novel. This exploration, which can be led by the classroom teacher, reading specialist, or librarian with one reading group at a time, offers students a variety in content, theme, genre, setting and writing styles. The program uses multiple copies of paperback books, some of which complement the social studies program. Selections are made using such sources as Newbery Awards, ALA Notable Books, and Elementary Library Collection.

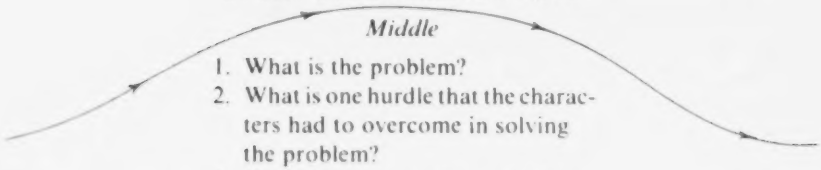
Upper elementary students enjoy such books as Carol Kendall's *Gammage Cup*, Sheila Burnford's *The Incredible Journey*, the Collier brothers' *My Brother Sam is Dead*, Marguerite de Angeli's *The Door in the Wall*, Allan W. Eckert's *Incident at Hawk's Hill*, Betsy Byars' *Trouble River*, and the nine part series by Jean Fritz that includes *And Then What Happened Paul Revere?*

The lessons last for a two or three week period of time for approximately thirty or fifty minutes per session. The chapter or section reading/writing assignments correspond to the number of days the group will meet. The students are expected to read and write in preparation for each special group meeting.

Lesson 1 - Each student is given a folder and an individual copy of the novel in a protective manila envelope. The teacher presents an overview of the novel. The students then discuss the cover, author, setting and other books by the author. The teacher models by webbing the main idea of the book.

Each student receives a copy of the STORY STRUCTURAL PARTS. As the story is read and discussed, the students answer the questions.

STORY STRUCTURAL PARTS



Middle

1. What is the problem?
2. What is one hurdle that the characters had to overcome in solving the problem?
3. How do the characters act when faced with the problem?

Beginning

1. Who are the main characters?
2. What kinds of people are they?
3. When does the story take place?
4. Where does the story take place?
5. What is the problem to be encountered?

End

1. How is the problem solved?
2. Who changes as a result of the problem?

The students are expected to complete the following requirements in preparation for each lesson:

1. Write a brief (5 to 8 sentences) summary of each chapter or alternate with answering these questions:
   a. Write about what you learned.
   b. Write what you think about what you just learned.
   c. Write at least two questions that you have about the information you read.
2. Pick five vocabulary words to be shared with the group. Look the words up in the dictionary and be able to discuss the meaning as used in the text. Write down the text page and location of each word on the text page.
3. List the characters as they appear in the novel. Write a brief (2 or 3 sentences) description about each character.
4. Bring in current events as they pertain to the readings.
5. Be prepared to share summaries and respond to the writings of the other students in the class.

Teachers and students can develop additional activities which complement their novel studies. The final lesson can be a "novel celebration" which completes their particular study. Foods mentioned in the text or of the period can be shared during the celebration. Students can draw illustrations sharing their favorite parts of the novel.

Yes, there can be life beyond the basal text. Both students and teachers reap the benefits. As one student was heard to remark, "This really is reading!"

Kathleen D. Dur
Nancy D. Manning
Kings Glen School
Fairfax County Public Schools

Individualized Novel Study

One day last year, as I prepared to discuss the *Scarlet Letter* with my 11th grade American Civilization class, David raised his hand. "Why can't we ever choose what we read in here?" I ignored the question and launched into a discussion of the character of Pearl. Students sat quietly and took notes, except for the three boys in back who dozed on and off, and the girl who laced her eyelashes with mascara. The bell rang and bored faces filed past me.

It was at that point that I decided to rethink my approach to teaching novels. I spent several weeks struggling with the issue and discussing it with my history partner. We came to some conclusions: while it is important for my students as a whole group to have the experience of reading and discussing the same novel, it is also important for them to exercise a choice in deciding what they read and to be involved in their own learning.

With this goal in mind, I drew up a new plan. In the past, I had shied away from offering choices of novels because I knew I could not "teach" ten novels, or even two, at the same time. Classroom management seemed to be an insurmountable problem. This time I decided to build the plan around two strategies with which my students were already familiar and proficient: small group discussion and learning logs.

Since my American Civilization students read two novels a quarter, I decided that one of those novels could be "their own." I set some priorities. I wanted my students:

- to select a novel that interested them and that pertained to the period of our interdisciplinary study,
- to participate actively in small groups,
- to be in charge of their own discussions,
- to be in charge of their own learning.

I brought 15 copies of eight different novels from our bookroom. I asked my students to select a novel that interested them and to keep a learning log on that novel. I reminded them that, in this log, they would record their observations, reactions, and questions as they read. I then asked students to group themselves according to the novel they had selected, and I gave out the following sheet of instructions:

I. You will meet in groups twice a week for the next four weeks.
II. Everyone in the group will read the whole novel.
III. Meeting 1 will be to organize. Meeting 8 will be to plan presentations. Meetings 2-7 will be to discuss.
IV. Meeting 1
    A. Elect a group leader.
    B. Divide the novel into 6 sections. You will discuss one section each time you meet.
    C. Assign 1 or 2 people to lead the discussion and to plan a quiz for each section. Rotate the assignment so that every person in the group leads a discussion.

D. Assign 1 or 2 people to research and provide information on the author.
E. Assign 1 or 2 people to summarize several articles of literary criticism.

V. Meetings 2-7
A. Take quiz, grade, turn in.
B. Discuss section by:
1. Sharing learning log entries.
2. Keeping a group list of main ideas from learning logs.
3. Discussing or answering at least one question from each learning log.

VI. Meeting 8
A. Plan a group presentation in which you share with the class some aspect of your novel. Be creative. Suggested forms: debate, comic strip, awards ceremony, T.V. talk show, newscast, game show, original simulation, town meeting, satirical review.
B. Be sure that each group member has a significant part in planning and/or presenting.

The plan was launched, and, for the next four weeks, my students took center stage. My partner and I observed each group, answered questions, and mediated disputes. We also evaluated the students regularly by giving them points for their positive participation and for accomplishing their tasks. We frequently wrote notes of compliments, observations, or questions to each group.

The approach seemed to work. Students were enthusiastic about their independence and about the novels. As I watched them, I realized that *real* individualization was occurring in my classroom, and that my students were becoming active learners.

Orlean Anderson
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Fairfax County, Virginia

Writing Before Reading

Writing after reading a piece of literature had always been my custom. My students would read *Romeo and Juliet*, and I'd assign an essay. We would read poetry, and then we'd write some. But at the suggestion of a colleague, I decided to reverse the process, to have students write before reading, and have I ever been pleased with the results.

I experimented first with imitating a situation or idea from a literary work. Before reading Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," students wrote about an imaginary walk down a country road in which they stopped in a churchyard. Students also selected a person and contrasted how that person would want to be remembered after death with how he really would be remembered. Before reading "Composed Upon Westminster

Bridge, September 3, 1802," students selected a city, a season, a time of day, and a vantage point from which to view the city, in order to write a description of their own cities. Each time the writing took 5-10 minutes, and voluntarily sharing with classmates took 5-15 minutes. Students approached the subsequent reading of the poems with enthusiasm.

I asked them why writing before reading worked, they said:

> "It helped me understand what I had read."
> "It put me in touch with my own feelings on the subject, and I could then relate the way I felt about something to the way the author felt."
> "It made me more interested. It also made me put forth extra effort to try to see what the poet was feeling. It was the push I needed to search deeper into the poem, and I saw a bit more in it than I probably would have otherwise."

I continued to experiment having students imitate a form before reading a selection of that genre. Before reading "My Last Duchess," students put a speaker in a situation with a silent listener in order to imitate Browning's dramatic monologue. I also experimented with conflict. In order to understand Romeo and Juliet's dilemma, students first wrote their own pieces about parent/child conflicts.

I don't have students write before reading every piece of literature, but I do use the technique to hook student interest in a work they might resist, to alert students beforehand to something I intend to emphasize later, and to ease students into something in the piece of literature they might find difficult or confusing.

Now, whenever I ask my kids to take out pencil and paper, they often ask, "Is this gonna be in something we're gonna read?" When I say, "Yes!" they usually eagerly begin writing, curious to find the connection between their writing and the author's.

Joyce H. Jones
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REVIEWS

Lynn Klamkin and Margot Livesay. *Writing About Literature: An Anthology for Reading and Writing*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1986, 1007 pp. Reviewed by Mickey Pellillo

Klamkin and Lifesay's new text offers students and teachers more than just another literature anthology enhanced by writing apparatus. Combining writing process and writing to learn theories with traditional literary techniques, Klamkin and Livesay provide students with sound approaches to discovering meaning in literature.

The major portion of the text, nearly 820 pages, includes 130 writing selections arranged in five thematic groups: Generation to Generation, Struggles, Places, Varieties of Love, and Work and Reward. Each section offers not only fiction, poetry, and drama, but also a sampling of essays. Three such selections in the Generation to Generation group, for example, include essays by Lewis Thomas and Sigmund Freud and a letter by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. "Questions for discussion and Writing" follow each reading selection, and each thematic section concludes with a list of possible topics for further exploration. Both groups of questions and topics provide direction for students to examine the work more closely and to apply the text in some way to their own lives.

A general introduction to reading and writing as well as detailed introductions to the essay, fiction, poetry, and drama precedes the anthology portion of the text. The initial chapter, "Reading in Depth," suggests that students approach all reading with questions in mind, such as "What is this work about?" "Do I like this work?" and "What else can I learn for this work?" The writing process chapters, though sometimes prescriptive in tone, discuss freewriting, brainstorming, questioning, formulating a thesis, outlining, drafting and revising. Editing concerns such as punctuation for quotations are also discussed. The section concludes with a complete student example—from freewriting to final draft.

The next four chapters, "Writing About Essays," "Writing About Fiction," "Writing About Poetry," and "Writing About Drama," are each a mix of definition, approach and example. The chapter on essays, for example, examines four types of essays—exposition, persuasion, description and narration. Theme, thesis, tone, and word usage specific to the essay are then discussed. "Suggestions for Writing About Essays," again in question form, precede the sample essay, Maya Angelou's "Graduations," and a student essay written in response to this selection. The other three "how to" chapters follow a similar format.

Overall, Klamkin and Livesay meet their aim "to help students develop the skills of reading and writing while at the same time enhancing their enjoyment of literature." Their expansion of literature to include essays,

letters and journals and their encouragement of students to question and re-question make theirs a strong reading and writing text.

Mickey Pellillo
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Patricia Campbell. *Presenting Robert Cormier*. Twayne, 1985, $12.95. Reviewed by Margaret Bristow.

Just as Robert Cormier "disturbed the universe" of young adult book with his novel *The Chocolate War* in 1974, Patricia J. Campbell has disturbed the universe of young adult literary criticism in her book *Presenting Robert Cormier*, for her book shows that young adult novels need not be seen as second class citizens unworthy of serious exegesis. The book contains what teachers of young adult literature have been waiting for – an insightful biography of a young adult novelist and an in-depth analysis of the young adult novels of an award winning author.

Campbell's book, in its superbly structured intriguing first chapter entitled "Bike Ride in Winter," takes the reader to Leominster, Massachusetts, birthplace and present residence of Cormier. Like Adam Farmer in *I Am the Cheese*, she rode her bike—an old bike—to Leominster and the neighboring town of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, which served as the setting for all of Cormier's novels and short stories. In this chapter she graphically points out what she saw while riding her bicycle to Leominster to interview Robert Cormier. She points out such specifics as the corner where Jerry Renault in *The Chocolate War* waited for the bus, the library where Adam first met Amy in *I Am the Cheese*, the actual Notre Dame Preparatory School which served as Trinity School in *The Chocolate War*, and various other places in Leominster and Fitchburg where Cormier has lived all his life and which served as the setting for his early novels and short stories.

In the second chapter, entitled "The Monster as Clark Kent," Campbel gives the reader insight into the personality and life of Robert Cormier, a Catholic who at certain points in life saw his religion as a conflict. Unlike the "monster" which some readers and critics may assume Cormier to be because of his seemingly bleak, hopeless, unremitting pessimism, Campbell reveals Cormier to be a family man, happily married to the same lady for thirty-eight years, a man who hesitates to kill a fly, a man who for a long time was scared of elevators and dogs, a man who cries at sad novels, longs for happy endings, a man who had time to talk to his children at one in the morning, a man who still makes a wish when he blows out the candles on his birthday cake and who dreads the day when there may be no one there to say 'Bless you' when he sneezed (p. 8). In this chapter Campbell shares with the reader several sad events in Cormier's life, events that may have caused him to write so pessimistically and whose memories recur in his writing: the death of his three-year-old brother when Cormier

was five, a nun holding him back from saving his burning house until he said a litany of prayers, the insensitive trick the doctors used before giving him anesthesia, and the death of his father.

"At the Typewriter" is the title of the third chapter, and in it we the readers are given detailed insight into the composing process of the "insomniac" Cormier who never hesitates to answer students' requests for information. Cormier says of his writing (which also serves as helpful admonition to our students), "At first when I sit down at the typewriter, I don't worry about syntax or finding writing. I try to capture a mood, an atmosphere, a scene or a character. And then I go back to find the exact phrase or word that arrests the action in the reader's mind. I look for words such as those good galloping active verbs which dance and jump from the page. I watch my adverbs. If I use too many I know my verbs are weak" (p. 26).

A former factory worker, radio commercial writer, newspaper editor and columnist, Cormier in 1978 was able to give up his job and devote all of his time to writing. This chapter also reveals the sources of his "helplessness at the hands of the system" motif that occurs in his writing. Having been in childhood a victim of some authoritarian nuns, Comier, a Catholic, frequently writes of characters at the mercy of authority referred to by Campbell as the "Implacable," that is, anything that represents the unalterable, the inflexible. Like the twice Newbery award winning young adult novelist, Katherine Paterson, in her book *The Gates of Excellence*, Cormier provocatively reveals intimacies about his writing influences, his writing habits, admitting that his characters do exist for him.

Chapters Four through Ten provide the reader excellent exegesis of Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, his early novels and short stories, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, his newest. (Fans of Cormier should note there is a two page sheet of answers to frequently asked questions about *I Am the Cheese* which Cormier will mail to you upon request.) In the aforementioned list, Campbell first gives a plot summary, then an analysis of structure, theme, character, imagery including metaphors and similes, symbols, and style. She does not skirt interpreting the complex parts of his novels, such as the last chapter of *I Am the Cheese*; neither does she fail to point out problems and flaws in them, such as the character of Cassie and the setting in *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, the overuse of metaphors and allusions in *The Chocolate War*. Not only does she present her own analysis, but she also summarizes and evaluates critics' views seen in major journals such as *Top of the News*, *The Wilson Library Bulletin*, *Kirkus Reviews* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. She is not afraid to point out the significance and relevance of his early short stories such as *Eight Plus One*, something that many readers and critics fail to see. Going against the tide of criticism which asserts that Cormier is unable to write convincing female characters, Campbell gives evidence that Cormier can depict convincing

female characters as seen in her list of his convincing details in his description of Grace (p. 94).

Chapter 5 centers on the summary and evaluation of the censorship surrounding *The Chocolate War*. Teachers and parents who were shocked to find out what is included in *The Chocolate War*, will be doubly shocked upon finding the details of the sex scene that were *excluded*. (Cormier was too embarrassed for his teenage daughter to read it; hence he left it out.) Campbell, after reading the corpus of Cormier's work, admits that Cormier, who laces much of his writing with allusions to T. S. Elliot, is at his best writing pessimistic novels. "Only in darkness does he show real power" (p. 91).

Unequivocally, this book has given the reader a journey, reminiscen of Adam's bicycle journey, into the heart of darkness, a journey into the source, the genesis of Cormier's fiction. But after the reader sees what childhood and early adult experiences generated the darkness in Cormier, then comes the light. For Cormier says, "There is hope but we must create it for ourselves." He maintains, "My books are an antidote to the TV view of life, where even in a suspenseful show you know before the last commercial that Starsky and Hutch will get their man. That's phony realism. Life just isn't like that" (p. 56).

Presenting Robert Cormier stands, therefore, as an antidote against conservative forces including certain English teachers who erroneously believe young adult novels are mainly for bibliotherapy and values clarification, not literary analysis. With remarkable writing skill and perspicacity reminiscent of Neil Phillip, who wrote *Fine Anger*, a critical introduction to the young adult fantasy writer Alan Garner, Campbell adds her book to a much needed, growing critical canon of young adult novels.

Margaret Bristow
teaches English at Hampton University.

Eileen M. Burke. *Early Childhood Literature*. Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1986. 277 pp., $20.00 paperback. Reviewed by Wilma J. Snyder.

How can parents and teachers counteract the pervasive effects of television on young children? Eileen M. Burke, in her new book, *Early Childhood Literature*, asserts that our most effective weapons are the books we share with our children. Her discussion of how realistic fiction and modern fantasy can create a mind full of experiences rather than the mindless engagement of television will be of great interest to many parents. Teachers, therefore, may also find this book most useful to them as a resource to recommend to parents.

Early Childhood Literature is written as a literature textbook concentrating on books for children three through eight years of age. It contains extensive lists of children's trade books, professional book lists, and suggested activities for the literature student. Burke writes in a clear,

readable style based on a thorough knowledge of the principles of child development.

Of great interest to those who work with very young children will be Burke's chapters on storytelling, poetry, and picture books. They are rich in ideas and bursting with titles. The many tables, charts, and lists organizing specific ways of using children's literature to meet designated purposes and needs will be very useful to teachers, librarians, parents, and any others who are responsible for the care of young children.

Burke says, "The early years of childhood are pristine, rich in potential, experimental, crucial, precious, and vulnerable to shaping. They cry out for the richest, deepest, fullest of experiences. They are developmentally prime time."

This book would be very beneficial in the hands of childcare workers, who often work in demanding, responsible jobs with little or no organized training. Unless childcare workers have been fortunate enough to have had childhoods rich in the experiences of books, they are likely to rely heavily on television and records to entertain children.

This book suggests very practical ways of including books in the preschool curriculum. Extensive tables match Fairy and Folk Tales with suggestions for follow-up activities or other books that would build concepts or information. For example, after sharing *The Fisherman and His Wife* by the Grimm Brothers, a parent or teacher might compare it with Godden's *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle* or McDermott's *The Stonecutter*. After reading *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Andersen, a parent might discuss the reasons the Emperor lied and share Burton's version of the story and Weil's *The Foolish King*. After *Journey Cake, Ho!* by Sawyer, parents and teachers might share other Gingerbread Boy variants.

The discussion of Choice Clusters will be useful to teachers and librarians. These clusters of books respond to the young child's "I want another book like that!" Clusters of books may be identified through conferences and observations to satisfy children's choices. Such clusters may be arranged around genre, similar settings, plots, characters, or moods. For example, a "setting" cluster might develop when a young child, first interested in Lobel's *On the Day Peter Stuyvesant Sailed into Town*, goes on to other colonial stories such as Peter Spier's *The Legend of New Amsterdam* or *If You Sailed on the Mayflower* by Anne McGovern. Then as the child's abilities increase, Jean Fritz's *Who's That Stepping on Plymouth Rock?* may be added to the cluster. Burke suggests several specific cluster groupings which the observant teacher or parent will be able to use and extend.

Another useful chart is that on Natural Progressions. Progressions can start with fiction and move to fact; start with poetry and move to prose. For example, *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* by Virginia Lee Burton can lead to *Heavy Equipment* by Jan Atkins. *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle can lead to *The Hidden Magic of Seeds* by Dorothy Shuttlesworth. *The Lion and the Mouse* by Aesop can lead to *The Lion Family* by Gladys Conklin.

The many specific examples and the personal writing style make this an extremely usable book. It is unfortunate that the textbook format might make this book unappealing to many who would benefit by its use. I believe that the author should publish portions of the book in shorter forms for a more general audience.

Early Childhood Literature is a comprehensive study of children's literature. It fills a need in that it is limited to the consideration of books for children ages three through eight. It includes older books which have stood the test of time, as well as brand new books which meet Burke's criteria for books that will have lasting value for children. The author goes beyond mere lists, charts, and tables to share with her readers her commitment to children and books.

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Fred Rogers and Barry Head. *Mister Rogers' Playbook*. Berkley Books, 1986, 251 pp., $7.95. Reviewed by Elizabeth Barber.

During ten-plus years of work with primary grade children, I have often pondered with colleagues the possible reasons why many bright, socio-economically advantaged youngsters have problems when they come to school. The most commonly observed difficulties have to do with their general "readiness" for school learning and include such things as the successful resolution of developmental issues appropriate to their age, growth in fine motor skills, healthy socialization and self-esteem, as well as specific comprehension/thinking skills: sequencing of events, predicting outcomes, understanding cause-and-effect relationships, and creative problem-solving. In conversations with other primary teachers, reading specialists and special education teachers, I have discussed a common thread: the kind of *play* these children experience in their early preschool years seems to have an effect on their success in school. Much has been said about the need for formal early childhood education, but a close look at the children who succeed in primary school shows early schooling to be a rather insignificant factor. Results of the Missouri New Parents as Teachers Project clearly support the contention that it is the *kind of play*, rather than its school or non-school setting, that can be a determining factor in children's later success in primary school. In his *Playbook*, Fred Rogers provides the guidance parents and other caretakers of young children need to help these youngsters grow and learn in the most natural and enjoyable way: through *play*.

Mister Rogers' Playbook reverberates with the gentle voice two generations of children have known and loved. Reading this book, I could feel myself moving back in time to the days when my baby sister, then thirteen years old, would hide in the den to watch the program that had

helped nurture her spirit through early childhood and still offered solace at the end of a tough day in middle school. And then I remember my days as mother of two spirited little boys whose rowdy play ceased temporarily each afternoon as they sat listening to the patron saint of preschoolers talk about how important it is to take your time "when you want to do a thing right." The harried mommy in the kitchen heard, too, and learned to be more patient when chubby fingers went slowly tying shoes or buttoning buttons. Now with one in high school and one in college, I look back and wonder what my hurry was all about. Even today, at the end of a particularly trying day at school, I, too, take respite in *The Neighborhood*. Mister Rogers is still helping me to experience through feelings what my logical self knows about little children and how they learn.

For two generations Fred Rogers has spoken softly and directly to the feelings of young children. So, too, does he speak softly to the feelings of caretakers of these children in his *Playbook*. Alternating chapters on activities with sound information on child development, Mister Rogers shows us how children use play to work through developmental issues and to make sense out of their experiences. Activities suggested include pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-math, pre-science and pre-social studies experiences, but the greatest lesson lies in Mister Rogers' philosophy of play itself. He says we should remind ourselves that "play is the outward expression of inner feelings." Inside every child is both a need to grow and a need to know. By being aware of and sensitive to the needs of young children, parents and caretakers can assist in their growth toward developmental milestones.

Mister Rogers cautions us against the pitfalls of "taking over" our children's play or trying to make it conform to adult standards. He shows us that if we adults want to provide appropriate experiences for growing children, we first need to consider the "why" behind their current behavior. We need to know why some children bite, or why others want to play with water or smear their peanut butter sandwiches on the table top. While setting limits on objectionable behaviors, we can look for opportunities for our youngsters to meet these needs in socially acceptable ways. Mister Rogers also shows us ways in which play can ease young children's anxieties associated with such things as enduring separation from a loved adult, the loss of a pet, or an impending hospitalization. He reminds us that little children are learning where "me" stops, where "you" begins, and how to be "us" sometimes. They need activities that help to develop this sense of "self."

So, too, do children need positive ways in which to learn about respecting the rights of others and waiting to take one's turn. The *Playbook* even has fingerplays to help with the development of fine motor coordination. Throughout, Mister Rogers shows us how playing games and sharing experiences with a trusted adult can help children develop the thinking skills so necessary for later success in school. *Mister Rogers' Playbook*

offers all of this, and much more. As a teacher of young children, I read this book hoping it would prove itself a good resource for parents. I also hoped to find activities that might help me work with my first graders in ways that would spark their curiosity and inventiveness. And would the *Playbook* address the general "readiness" needs common to many children in primary grades? *Mister Rogers' Playbook* not only met all my criteria, but also served to remind me that even we adults might enjoy life more fully and be more resilient to its stresses if we approached each day with a playful spirit.

And did reading *Mister Rogers' Playbook* leave me feeling as good as watching his program with a cuddly four-year-old on my lap? If you can't guess the answer, you will just have to read it for yourself. But watch out, because you may find yourself overcome by a desire to collect rubbings of autumn leaves, make go-carts out of egg boxes, or build your favorite preschoolers a child-sized stand for their own personal scrapbooks. As a professional educator, I heartily recommend *Mister Rogers' Playbook* to all parents, teachers and friends of young children. But you will have to excuse me now. I'm busy making my first-graders a play-map of their neighborhood, sized just right for matchbox cars and milk carton houses.

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Donna Rosenberg and Sorelle Baker. *Mythology and You.* National Text Book Company, 1984 and Donna Rosenberg. *World Mythology: An Anthology of the Great Myth and Epics.* National Text Book Company, 1986. Reviewed by Carolyn Timberlake.

It is always fun and interesting to review new publications, but it is a special treat for someone who loves ancient Rome and its mythology and the study of literature to have the opportunity to review books which incorporate both areas. Thus, with great pleasure I pass along the joy and excitement of two new text books in the field of mythology. Both *Mythology and You* by Donna Rosenberg and Sorelle Baker and *Word Mythology: An Anthology of the Great Myth and Epics* by Donna Rosenberg are excellent mythology texts.

Mythology and You is the easier of the two when one considers reading level and is suitable for all high school grade levels. The collection is strictly classical mythology with references to gods and goddesses only in Greek. The authors do an excellent job of both start-up activities and follow-up questions, pointing out the relevance of mythology to the world today. The book is organized into four sections, dealing with creation, Olympian family, myths of man, and heroes. Each section begins with a brief introduction; and then, preceding each myth, exercises called "anticipations" introduce the student to the myth at hand and begin the connection of

the myth to the world today. Next the authors retell the myth in clear exciting detail and conclude with "reflections," a section which contains activities and questions, ranging from simple recall to synthesis. In addition, the teacher's guide aids the teacher in guiding the student through anticipations, the myth, and reflections giving comments and insights on each myth, as well as suggestions for critical thinking exercises and out of class assignments and activities.

World Mythology, because of its more difficult vocabulary and sentence structure and its more comprehensive approach, is appropriate for the upper grades of high school. After a five section introduction, covering the nature, purpose, perspective, etc. of mythology, the book proceeds with myths grouped both chronologically and geographically. Greek and Roman myths are followed by those of the Mideast, Britain, Far East, Africa, and the Americas. In addition Rosenberg has cross-referenced the table of contents by themes. These themes include creation, fertility, and heroes. So the student or teacher is able to find easily all the myths on a particular theme contained in the book, regardless of country or origin.

The anthology also contains selections from longer works such as the *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, *Gilgamesh*, *Beowulf*, and *King Arthur* and at least in the Greek and Roman section tales which are more traditional history rather than simple myth, such as the story of Romulus and Remus. The variety of stories is thus both complete and well done. *World Mythology* also includes a teacher's guide with commentary and insightful information about each selection, as well as details about traditional characteristics of the myth and the relationship of these qualities to today.

Both books are excellent resources for the English, history or ancient language classroom. *Mythology and You* is a complete Greek mythology and is the better choice for the average high school classroom. Students will enjoy both the introductory exercises and the follow up reflections as much as they do the actual myth. *World Mythology* is more scholarly and by nature much more comprehensive. The mixture of mythology and legend is an asset, and the table of contents, organized both thematically and geographically, suggests several different teaching and learning strategies. It is indeed a joy to see two mythology texts complete with teacher's guides suited for use as either a text book or as resource material in several different but related disciplines.

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